



# SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET

EDITED WITH

*Introduction, Paraphrase, Notes, Explanations,  
Questions and Answers etc.*

BY

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. LIFE AND GENIUS OF SHAKESPEARE

#### (i) Difficulties in making a biography of Shakespeare

Shakespeare was born at Stratford-on-Avon the year in which Michael Angelo died at Rome; and the death of the greatest English poet and dramatist took place on the same date on which the great Spanish writer, Cervantes died in Madrid. The two great creative artists of the Spanish and the English Renaissance, the creators of Don Quixote and Hamlet, Sancho Panza and Falstaff finished their mortal career on this earth simultaneously.

Shakespeare died more than three hundred years ago and European critics and commentators are still busy making patient and laborious researches about his life. There is very little authentic material available for Shakespeare's biography. In fact, interest in personality and biography evolved very late in England. We hardly possess any specimen of Shakespeare's handwriting; we have no letters written by him and only one (a business letter) written to him. Of the manuscripts of his works not a single line is extant; and the sole specimens of his handwriting consist of five or six signatures, three appended to his will, two to contracts, and one, rather doubtful, on a copy of Florio's translation of Mon'signe, which is preserved, and may be seen, at the British Museum. Even the authorship of several of his plays is debatable and one school of critics has gone to the extent of maintaining that such a simple and prosaic man, as the facts of Shakespeare's life make him out to be, could never have been the author of those wonderful plays attributed to him. The plays give evidence of a many-sided knowledge and insight; he was well acquainted with legal technicalities. he was familiar with the customs, manners and localities of foreign countries, particularly of Italy. It may be maintained that Shakespeare acquired his legal knowledge in the course of his father's law suits, or perhaps he served as an apprentice to some lawyer during 1586 and 1590, when we lose sight of him for a while after he left Stratford. And he had probably visited foreign countries during the autumn of 1592 and the summer of 1593, when the London theatres were closed on account of the



plague. Still certain critics hold that the wide knowledge of the affairs of men, of the habits of birds and animals, of plant-life, of medical science, of astronomy, of popular superstitions, etc., displayed in his works could not have been possible to the son of a "butcher". According to these critics Shakespeare was a prosperous businessman, and the plays were the works of "some penniless, famished Chatterton", who sold his genius to Shakespeare and allowed him to palm off on the world works that were not his own. The fact that Shakespeare suddenly withdrew from London and retired from the career of dramatist lends additional support to the view of these critics, for they think that the poet who was the actual writer of the plays had died, and Shakespeare survived him. Some critics maintain that the plays were written by Bacon, the most learned and accomplished man of his age. Bacon, they say, was a very greedy man and he wrote these plays anonymously in order to earn money. But we must remember that Bacon was studiously careful about the publication of his works, and Shakespeare's plays were most carelessly and faultily printed. Besides, it seems improbable that Shakespeare's fellow actors, Haminge and Condell, his friend Ben Jonson and other contemporaries should not have discovered this colossal fraud, but, on the contrary, should have unanimously paid tributes to the greatness of Shakespeare's genius. We may, in fact, say, in the words of Judge Allen that "when the Baconians can show that Ben Jonson was either a fool or a knave, or that the whole world of players and playwrights at that time was in a conspiracy to palm off on the ages the most astounding cheat in history, they will be worthy of serious attention".

The difficulties of making up a biography of Shakespeare are many. We do not know for certain when he was born or in which house, when he left Stratford for London or returned to his native place, whether he ever went abroad or visited Italy. We cannot say to whom his sonnets were addressed, we cannot explain why, as he advanced in life, his prevailing mood, he reflected in his works, became gloomier and darker, and attained a serenity in his last days. Nor can we satisfactorily give the chronological order of his plays, or explain why he never cared to have his plays printed.

On the other hand, however, patient and indefatigable

research by enthusiastic scholars has revealed a great number of indubitable facts about the poet's life. There are documents, contracts, legal records; we can cite the utterances of contemporaries, allusions to his works and to passages in them, quotations, fierce attacks, outbursts of hatred, testimonies to his amiable and winning disposition, his popularity as an actor and a playwright. There are, moreover, one or two diaries kept by contemporaries, besides the account-book of an old theatrical manager and pawnbroker, who supplied the players with money and dresses, and who has preserved the dates of the production of many plays. In addition to these contemporary evidences, there are the evidences of tradition, which may be summarised as below.

(1) Some notes of information gathered from the inhabitants of the district in 1662.

(2) Some details recorded by one Mr. Dowdall in 1693. These he had learnt from the octogenarian sexton of Stratford Church.

(3) The materials gathered by Nicholas Rowe, who published the first biography of Shakespeare in 1702. Rowe derived his information from three sources.

(4) The information derived from Sir William Davenant, Poet Laureate, believed to be an illegitimate son of Shakespeare. Davenant's contributions, however, could have reached Rowe only at second hand, since he died before Rowe was born.

(5) Agbrey, an antiquary visited Stratford half a century after Shakespeare's death and gathered certain anecdotes about Shakespeare. These are not all wholly correct but contain certain gross and demonstrable errors.

(6) Rowe's most important source of information was Betterton, the actor who, about 1630, made a journey to Warwickshire with the special purpose of collecting whatever oral traditions with regard to Shakespeare lingered in his native district. Contemporary documents subsequently discovered have, to a large extent, confirmed Betterton's gleanings.

It will be seen, therefore, that the problem of Shakespeare's biography, although difficult, is not impossible. Besides all this external evidence, we may interpret the temper of Shakespeare at different periods of his life by a perusal of his works. The Sonnets, in particular, have a special autobio-

graphical value—With regard to his plays, we must remember that Shakespeare was a dramatist, his art is objective, and like all great art, it is impersonal. We should be treading on unsure ground if we made his plays the basis for his life history. Browning, in his well known poem, *At the Mermaid*, represents Shakespeare as 'taking his ease at his inn' with Ben Jonson and other kindred wits, and saying .

'Here's my work does work discover  
What was rest from work—my life ?  
Did I live man's hater, lover ?  
Leave the world at peace, at strife ?

Blank of such a record, truly,  
Here's the work I hand, this scroll,  
Yours to take or leave 'as duly  
Mine remains the unproffered soul'

Browning's view is also shared by Halliwell Phillips who asserts that 'determined care' must be taken 'to avoid the temptation of endeavouring to illustrate (Shakespeare's) history by his writings, or to decipher his character and sensibilities through their media'. Dowden, on the other hand, declares that "if we could watch (Shakespeare's) writings closely, and observe their growth, the laws of that growth would be referable to the nature of the man, and to the nature of his environment. And we might even be able to refer to one and the other of these two factors producing a common resultant, that which is specially due to each. Fortunately the succession of Shakespeare's writings is sufficiently ascertained to enable us to study the main features of the growth of Shakespeare as an artist and as a man'.

"Between these conflicting views," to quote the opinion of Mr Frederick S Boas "there opens a *via media*, possibly less attractive but more secure. The denial of any discoverable relationship between Shakespeare's plays and his life is unconvincing, when pushed to extremes. No writer, be he dramatist or not, can cut himself entirely adrift from the general influences of his age, and from his special personal experiences. It is wholly unconceivable that his works should not reveal something of his individuality, or that changes in their general tone should be quite uncoloured by his own vicissitudes of mind and fortune. Thus it is obvious

that comedies like *Love's Labours Lost* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* contain reminiscences of country society and surroundings such as would have been under the poet's eyes during his early days in Stratford. Again, the remarkable difference between the comedies written during the closing years of the sixteenth century and the tragedies which belong to the first decade of the seventeenth, suggests that Shakespeare had at this period gone through some bitter affliction of soul, and it will be shown that there is strong confirmatory evidence of this. Or, once again, the general political principles that underlie the whole group of historical plays, the ardent patriotism, the zeal for monarchy when worthily represented, the conservative distrust of violent social change, the undisguised contempt for demagogues and their dupes—all these are not only what we should naturally expect in an Elizabethan citizen, ancestrally connected with the higher yeoman class, and brought in his professional capacity into connexion with the Court, but they are further in complete accordance with Shakespeare's ambition to become a landowner, as clearly evidenced by his repeated purchases of property at Stratford . . . But are we, therefore, warranted in going further, and endeavouring, by a combination of references from the plays with our comparatively slight knowledge of the external facts of the dramatist's life, to recreate the history of his development both as an artist and a man? The broad fact remains that these endeavours to reconstruct the poet's biography from a mixture of external and internal evidence must always be unsatisfactory. The links between the two sets of data are so few and fragmentary that it is impossible to place them together in a consistent whole. Thus to say that the man William Shakespeare, the native of Stratford, the actor and playwright, the purchaser of New Place, passed successively in his own mental history through the experience of a Romeo, a Hamlet, and a Timon, may be quite conceivably true, but in the comparative dearth of facts to throw light on such changes of mood, a statement of the kind is of little service to the poet's biography". [Shakespeare and His Predecessors, pp 90-91].

## (ii) Birth . Parentage . School and Marriage

The facts of Shakespeare's life that we know are very few

and may be briefly summarised in the words of Steevens, appended in a note to Shakespeare's sonnets:

"Concerning the poet's circumstances, all that we know with any certainty of Shakespeare is, that he was born in Stratford-on-Avon, married and had children; that he went to London, where he appeared as an actor, and wrote poems and plays, that he returned to Stratford, made his will, died, and was buried."

The date of Shakespeare's birth cannot be stated with certainty. He was baptised on April 26, 1564, according to an entry in the Register of Baptisms at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford, which runs thus—

1564, April 25 Gulielmus filius Johannes Shakespere'

The usual practice in those days was to present children for baptism on the third day after their birth; it has been generally thought that the poet's birthday was April 23 or 22. More probably it was the 22nd, although tradition gives it as 23rd, since, if Shakespeare had died on his birthday—he died on the 23rd April, 1616—his epiaph would have mentioned the circumstance, and would not have merely stated that he died in his fifty-third year [Ætatis 53]. His father, John Shakespeare, the second son of Richard Shakespeare, came to Stratford about the year 1551. He is called a "glover" in the records of a suit brought against him in 1556, but Hubrey describes him as a "butcher." He carried on business as a tanner and glover, and at the time of the poet's birth was in flourishing circumstances. In 1557 he married Mary Arden, the youngest daughter of Robert Arden, a well to do yeoman in the neighbourhood. On the death of her father, she inherited considerable property and thus John Shakespeare was able to extend his business, and gradually rose to be one of the four "petty constables" of his town in 1558, Chamberlain in 1561, Alderman in 1565, High Bailiff in 1568 and finally Chief Alderman in 1571.

Shakespeare's parents did not seem to have possessed any school education, and neither could read or write his or her own name. But they sent the boy, William—who was their child, but first son—to the Grammar School of Stratford, while he was only seven years old. It was here that he acquired the "small Latin and less Greek" to which Ben Jonson has referred. But Shakespeare had to be taken away from school

very soon, for his father's affairs were steadily declining In 1578 John Shakespeare had to mortgage his wife's property for £ 40 In the same year the Town Council absolved him altogether from payment of a poor-rate levied on the other Aldermen He became involved in law-suits and debts, so much so that he would not attend the meetings of the Town Council for fear of being arrested by his creditors. In 1592, we find, according to Sir Thomas Lucy's report, that John Shakespeare was one of the those who did not obey Her Majesty's order that the inhabitants of Stratford should attend church once a month—he "coom not to churche for fear of processe for debtte."

The boy Shakespeare's education, therefore, had to be suddenly stopped, and William was required at home to help his father. At this stage we lose all traces of the Poet, and it has been conjectured that he might have worked as a schoolmaster or as an apprentice in some lawyer's office The latter view is confirmed by the large and comprehensive knowledge of legal phrases and procedure which is displayed in his plays. In 1582, the veil lifts over the Poet's life again. Two Stratford farmers, Fulk Randels and John Richardson signed on the 28th November of that year a bond 'that William Shakespeare one those partie and Anne Hathway of Stratford, in the dioces of Worcestre maiden, may lawfully solemnise marriage together and becoming liable to forfeit a sum of £ 40 in case there should be any lawful impediment to the marriage.' The date of the marriage is not known, but the Register of Baptisms records the entry '1583, May 26th, Susannah, daughter to Wilham Shakespeare' The marriage was celebrated in December 1582 Shakespeare was then only eighteen, his father was in difficult circumstances, and Shakespeare himself had nothing to live on Under such circumstances the marriage seemed precipitate and ill-advised. But it was rendered unavoidable by some youthful indiscretion on the part of the poet, for it was the bride's family that hurried on the marriage while the bridegroom's held back, and even opposed it. Moreover, the first child Susanna, a daughter, was born only five months and three weeks after the wedding But perhaps the formal betrothal which was at that time regarded as the essential part of the contract, had preceded the marriage. Anne was a simple village girl, eight years older than her husband.

she did not possess any refinements or graces which could hold the poet for long. Critics find references in his plays to prove that Shakespeare's marriage was not happy and that he regretted his youthful folly take, for instance, Prospero's warning to Ferdinand in *The Tempest* IV, i

"If thou dost break her virgin knot before  
All sanctionous ceremonies may,  
With full and holy rite, be minister'd,  
No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall  
To make this contract grow, but barren hate,  
Sour-ey'd disdain, and discord, shall besbrew  
The union of your bed with weeds so loathly,  
That you shall hate it both "

Again, in the *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare mentions it as a fact indispensable for a happy married life that the wife should be younger than her husband, and critics try to conclude from these passages that Shakespeare was not quite happy with his wife

"Let still the woman take  
An elder than herself, so wears she to him  
So sways she level in her husband's heart "

Or again,

"Then, let thy love be younger than thyself,  
Or thy affection cannot hold the bent." II iv.

Besides the evidence afforded by these passages, we know that Shakespeare left his village home and settled down in London soon after his marriage, and in his will all that he bequeathed to his wife was his second best bed'. All those facts seem to favour the view that Shakespeare's married life was not very happy "But", if I may be allowed to quote my own words written elsewhere, "such an inference should be taken with a grain of salt. We should remember that great men do not wash their dirty linen in public, and even if Shakespeare's domestic life was unhappy, he would not harangue about it in his dramas. And although he settled down in London for purpose of making money, he used to visit his country home almost every year and at the end of a very successful career, he returned to Stratford to enjoy the fruits of his strenuous labour surrounded by the happy smiles of his wife and children. And when we remember

that a bedstead was considered an article of luxury in those days, we shall easily see that it was the best gift that an affectionate husband could leave to his wife. Moreover, Shakespeare had sufficient knowledge of the law to know that his widow would be entitled to a certain income for life out of his property". And lastly, take the evidence of the following lines written to his wife, which reveal a tender feeling in the poet's heart for her :

"How like a Winter bath my absence been  
From thee  
For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,  
And, thou away, the very birds are mute".

### (iii) London the Stage and Play-writing.

Shakespeare left Stratford for London about the year 1585, shortly after the birth of his twins. Hamnet and Judith, the former, who was Shakespeare's only son, died in August 1596. His father's financial position necessitated his taking up a profession for himself. He had to leave Stratford also because, according to Rowe, he had "fallen into ill company" and taken part in more than one deerstealing raid upon Sir Thomas Lucy's park at Charlecote. "For this he was prosecuted by that gentleman, as he thought, some what severely, and in order to revenge that ill usage he made a ballad upon him... It is said to have been so very bitter that it redoubled the prosecution against him to that degree that he was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire for some time and shelter himself in London". But we cannot doubt that Shakespeare's main purpose in London was to seek a career. He must have seen dramatic performances by companies of strolling players who occasionally visited Stratford. The poet's father, as the High Bailiff, would grant permission to these companies and there is a tradition that Shakespeare saw these early dramatic performances standing 'between his father's legs'.

Coming to London he began to take an interest in dramatic performances and we have the definite authority of Aubrey that:

"This William being inclined naturally to poetry and acting, came to London, I guess about 18; and was an actor at one of the playhouses, and did act exceedingly well. He



began early to make essays at dramatique poetry, which at that time was very lowe, and his playes tooke well. He was a handsome, well-shap'd man, very good company, and of a very readie and pleasant smooth witt "

Shakespeare, therefore, became early connected with the London stage. He must have begun with an inferior position. Dr Johnson records a story which Sir William Davenant had told to Betterton

'In the time of Elizabeth, coaches being yet uncommon, and hired coaches not all in use, those who were too proud, too tender, or too idle to walk, went on horseback to any distant business or diversion. Many came on horseback to the play, and when Shakespeare died to London from the terror of a criminal prosecution, his first expedient was to wait at the door of the playhouse and hold the horses of those that had no servants, that they might be ready again after the performance. In this office he became so conspicuous for his care and readiness, that in a short time every man, as he alighted, called for Will. Shakespeare, and scarcely any other waiter was trusted with a horse, while Will Shakespeare could be had.'

According to Malore, however,

'There is a stage tradition, that this first office in the theatre was that of prompters' attendant, whose employment it is to give the performers notice to be ready to enter as often as the business of the play requires their appearance on the stage.'

Shakespeare probably began as an inferior actor ' he never attained distinction in this role, for in the words of Rowe 'his admirable wit soon distinguish'd him if not as an extraordinary actor, yet as an excellent writer. the top of his performance was the ghost in his own Hamlet' Soon he turned to writing plays, and began by adapting and refurbishing old plays for his company. He even seems to have collaborated with the older playwrights. His Henry the Sixth was probably an adaptation of Marlowe and Green's True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the death of the good King Henry the Sixth. The success of Shakespeare's play led to an envious outburst by Green in his pamphlet, A Groat's Worth of Wit bought with a Miller of Repentance (August 1592).'

"There is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tyger's heart wrapped in a Flayer's hide* supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you. and being an absolute Johannes factotum, is in his owne conceit the only Shake scene in a countrie."

The allusion to Shakespeare's name is unmistakable, and the ridiculed remark is a reference to 3 Henry VI. I, iv, 137: 'Oh Tygel's heart wrapt in a serpent's hide'

It is evident that Shakespeare was very highly esteemed, for soon after in December 1592, Henry Chettle, who had published Green's pamphlet, regretted in the preface to his *Kind-hart's Dreame*, the remark concerning Shakespeare:

"I am as sory as if the original fault had beene my fault, because my selfe have seene his demeanour no lesse civil than he excellert in the qualitie he professes. Besides, divers of worships have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that aprooves his Art."

Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* was published in 1593 and *Locrine* in 1594. Both these poems were dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, who showed him 'many great and uncommon marks of favour and friendship'. Rowe records a story, handed down by Sir William D' Avenant that 'my lord Southampton at one time gave him a thousand pounds to enable him to go through with a purchase which he heard he had a mind to'. The story seems exaggerated, but not improbable. The Earl might have made a return for the poem *Venus and Adonis* "the first heir" Shakespeare's "invention", which was dedicated to him. The 'purchase' referred to was the purchase of a share in the Globe Theatre which Richard Barbege was planning to build in 1593. Shakespeare was certainly growing both in fame and fortune very rapidly. In 1596, he had money to spare to fee the Heralds for assigning a coat of arms to his father, which was not formally granted until 1599. Early in 1600 he bought for £60, New Place, the largest house in his native town. Tributes to his genius as a playwright were repeatedly paid by his contemporaries. Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia, Wit's Treasury*, published in 1598 wrote as follows:

"As the Greeke tongue is made famous and eloquent by Homer Hesiod . . . and the Latin tongue by Virgil, Ovid . . ."

the English tongue is mightily enriched, gorgeously invested in rare ornaments and resplendent abillments by *Sir Philip Sidney, Spenser, Daniel, Drayton, Warner, Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Chaptman*. As *Plautus* and *Seneca* are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latins, so *Shakespeare* among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage. As *Epius Solo* said that the Muses would speak with *Plautus* tongue if they would speak Latin so I say that the Muses would speak with *Shakespeare's* fine filed phrase if they would speak English. . . "The Queen admired her plays and "had several of his plays acted before her, and without doubt gave him many gracious marks of her favour. She was so well pleas'd with that admirable character of *Falstaff*, in the two parts of *Henry the Fourth*, that she commanded him to continue it for one play more, and to show him in love. This is said to be the occasion of his writing *The Merry Wives of Windsor*" (Rowe)

When *James I* succeeded to the throne one of his first acts was to issue (17th May 1603) a licence to *Shakespeare* and his fellow actors 'freely to use and exercise the Arte and facultie of playing Comedies, Tragedies, Histories, Enterludes, Moralls, Pastoralls, Sage-plays and such o her like . . as well for the recreation of our loving subjects as for our solace and pleasure, when we shall thinke good to see them'. When the king made his state entry in London the next year, *Shakespeare* was one of those in attendance and received 4½ yards of 'Sharlet red cloth' for a dress upon that occasion.

Besides the Court Nobles and men of high state *Shakespeare* had also won the friendship of the famous writers of his age. *Fuller* has referred to the combats between *Ben Johnson* and *Shakespeare*, and borne testimony to the latter's nimble and ready wit. *Shakespeare* himself was very kind to *Ben Johnson* and *Rowe* gives an interesting account of the origin of his friendship with *Ben Jonson*. *Ben Jonson*, who was unknown at the time as an author, offered one of his plays to be acted to *Shakespeare's* Company. The manager, after turning it over carelessly was on the point of returning it with an ill natur'd answer that it would be of no service to their company, when *Shakespeare* cast his eye upon it. He read it through and recommended *Jonson* and

his writings to the public. Ben Jonson has paid a glowing tribute to his friend.

"I loved the man, and do honour his memory on the side idolatry as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and full nature, had an excellent phantasy (fancy), brave notions, and gentle expressions". Again, in the commendatory verses prefixed to the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays brought out by Shakespeare's fellow actors Heminge and Cordell after the poet's death, Ben Jonson referred to him as .

"Soule of the Age !

The applause ! delight ! the wonder of our stage !

.. .. how farre thou didst our *Lily* outshine,

Or sporting *Kyd* or *Marlow's* mighty line.

.. .. .

.. .. .

He was not of an age, but for all time !

.. .. .

Nature herself was proud of his designs,

And joy'd to weare the dressing of his lines !

Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,

As, since, she will vouchsafe no other Wit."

The first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays was brought out posthumously in 1623 by his fellow-actors, Heminge and Condell, who refer to him in the following words :

"As he was a happy imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together And what he thought, he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers."

#### (IV) Return to Stratford and Last Days

Shakespeare amassed a great fortune as play-wright, theatre-manager and share-holder. After a very successful life in London, he retired to Stratford where he enjoyed all that makes life happy 'as honour, love, obedience, troops of friends'. He occasionally helped his needy friends; and entertained his guests with lavish hospitality. He lived in his pleasant house at Stratford as a man of fortune, in the happy company of his wife and daughter and children's children. His elder daughter, Susanna, who had married the famous physician, Dr. John Hall, in 1607, used to live at

Stratford the younger daughter Judith lived with her mother at New Place. According to the testimony of Rowe

"The latter part of his life was spent, as all men of good sense will wish theirs may be, in ease, retirement, and the conversation of his friends. He had the good fortune to gather an estate equal to his occasion, and, in that, to his wish and is said to have spent some years before his death at his native Stratford. His pleasurable wit and good nature engaged him in the acquaintance and entitled him to the friendship of the gentlemen of the neighbourhood".

In 1616 the poet made his will, leaving almost the whole of his property to his eldest daughter for life, and afterwards to her son, if she should have one, if not, to Judith's son. To his wife he left only his second-best bed. He died of a fever" on the 23rd April, 1616 and was buried in the chancel of his parish church. The following lines, traditionally believed to have been prepared by him before his death, were inscribed upon his grave—

Good friend for Jesus sake forbear,  
To digg the dust enclosed here  
Blest be ye man yt spares the stones,—  
And curst be he yt moves my bones,

#### (V) His Plays.

Tributes to Shakespeare's genius as a play wright were paid both by his contemporaries and subsequent critics. "Thou in our wonder and astonishment hast built thyself a livelong monument", wrote Milton, and Carlyle declared of him that he was "the grandest thing we have yet done". Indian Empire will go, at any rate some day but this Shakespeare does not go, he lasts for ever with us,—we cannot give up our Shakespeare". The plays of Shakespeare are a permanent heritage of the English nation, but their chronological order is not easy to determine. In Shakespeare's time, plays were not usually printed. The author used to sell the manuscript to the company and ceased to have any further interest in it thereafter. There were no laws of copyright, sometimes shorthand writers, sent by rival companies, would take down notes during the performance of a play, under the pretext of criticizing it. Several of Shakespeare's plays (at least five) were thus printed from 'diverse stolen and surrep-

During this period he wrote *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, most of his historical plays, a few comedies, and the sonnets. The work of this period was done in close imitation of Marlowe and Kyd. The plays belonging to this period are *Titus Andronicus*, the three parts of *Henry VI*, *Richard III*, *King John*, *Richard II*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—but the first two are not universally accepted as being Shakespeare's own.

The second period extends from 1595 to 1600; and the plays ascribed to this period are *Parts I & II of Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Romeo and Juliet* (which some believe to have been begun in 1591), *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*. Shakespeare's powers had now matured; he had greater psychological insight and could create more complex characters. Besides, this is the period of his scintillating comedies which give a picture of "life in its sunnier aspects, though leavened with enough of mischance and misdoing not to lose a hold of reality."

The third period (1600—1609) is the period of Shakespeare's Tragic plays. His attention is now turned to deeper problems of life and his outlook on life has a sense of bitterness and pessimism. The plays of this period are *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens*.

The last period (1608—1612) is the period of his Romances. Shakespeare seems to have attained philosophic calm and tolerance for the faults of human nature. A spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness breathes through the plays of this period, which are *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*.

#### (VI) Chronological Chart of Shakespeare's Plays.

(After E. Dowden)

##### 1. Pre-Shakespearean Group, Touched by Shakespeare.

*Titus Andronicus* : 1558 90.

Part I *Henry VI* 1590 1.

##### 2. Early Comedy.

*Love's Labour's Lost* : 1590.

*Comedy of Errors* : 1591.

- Two Gentlemen of Verona : 1592-3  
 Midsummer Night's Dream : 1593-4.
- 3 Marlowe Shakespearean Group Early History  
 Parts II and III Henry VI . 1591-2.  
 Richard III 1553
4. Early Tragedy.  
 Romeo and Juliet 1591 ?
5. Middle History  
 Richard II 1594-  
 King John . 1595
6. Middle Comedy  
 Merchant of Venice 1596,
- 7 Later History. History and Comedy United.  
 Parts I and II Henry IV 1597-8  
 Henry V 1599.
8. Later Comedy  
 A. Rough and Brevi Manu  
 Taming of the Shrew 1597 ?  
 Merry Wives of Windsor 1598 ?  
 B. Joyous, refined, romantic.  
 Much Ado About Nothing : 1598.  
 As You Like It 1599  
 Twelfth Night 1600 1.  
 C Serious, dark, ironical  
 All's Well that Ends Well . 1601-2 ?  
 Measure for Measure . 1603 ?  
 Troilus and Cressida : 1603 ? revised 1607 ?
9. Middle Tragedy.  
 Julius Ceasar 1501.  
 Hamlet . 1602.
10. Later Tragedy.  
 Othello : 1604  
 Lear . 1605  
 Macbeth . 1606  
 Antony and Cleopatra 1607.  
 Coriolanus . 1608  
 Timon of Athens . 1607-8

## 11. Romances

Pericles · 1608  
 Cymbeline : 1609.  
 Tempest 1610  
 Winter's Tale · 1610-11.

## 2. ELIZABETHAN AGE

"If a dramatist doesn't wish to employ his gifts in an effort condemned to failure in advance, he must—and this is one of the first duties of the artist,—he must consider his public respect, their sentiments and skilfully conform himself to ideas and customs". So wrote a French critic, M. Du Me'ril in the Introduction to his History of Comedy. In order, therefore to estimate the work of Shakespeare rightly, one must understand the public for which he wrote and the circumstances under which he worked

The age in which Shakespeare lived and wrote was a most remarkable epoch in England. The English nation had shaken off the subjugation of the Church of Rome and the political overshadowing of Spain. The defeat of the Spanish Armada completed the freedom, political, spiritual and mental of England. Englishmen became conscious of their power and prestige, their mental vision, their ambition for political expansion, their thirst for "knowledge infinite", began to swell more and more as the great Queen's power became secure and stable. An ardent curiosity, an eager interest in all the possibilities of human experience stimulated the minds of the men of Elizabethan England. People saw that life was beautiful and they wanted to make the utmost of it, to suck the very marrow out of it, to drink it to the lees. They had a zest for life, both intellectual as well as physical; they did not worry themselves about heaven or hell, their philosophy of life was vigorously mundane. "Heaven may be very real, we have a good hope that it is so, meanwhile here is our earth a substantial, indubitable fact" (Dowden). This was the outlook of the average Elizabethan they did not attempt to solve the question of the Great Hereafter; and as  
 \* Mr. E. O. West, in an article on "Browning as a Preacher" remarked, even Shakespeare in his great tragedies, "traces the workings of noble or lovely human character on to the point—and no further—where they disappear into the dark-



ness of death, and ends with a look back, never on towards anything beyond "

The spirit of the age can be very well illustrated from its literature. Consider, for example, the following passage from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in which the poet rhapsodizes on the god like reach of man—

'What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties, in form and moving! how express and admirable in action! how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!'

And not only Shakespeare, but also Marlowe was moved by the same spirit. His two greatest characters, Tamburlaine and Faustus have insatiable thirst for power and knowledge. Consider, for instance, the following speech of Faustus—

"O what a world of profit and delight,  
Of power, of honour, of omnipotence  
Is promised to the studious artizan!  
All things that move between the quiet poles  
Shall be at my command. Emperors and kings  
Are but obeyed in their several provinces,  
Nor can they raise the wind, or rend the clouds;  
But his dominion that exceeds in this,  
Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man."

Similarly, Tamburlaine declares that

"Nature, that fram'd us of four elements  
Warring within our breasts for regiment,  
Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds;  
Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend  
The wonderous architecture of the world,  
And measure every wandering planet's course,  
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,  
And always moving as the restless spheres  
Will us to wear ourselves and never rest."

It was an age of overflowing energy and great versatility. There was nothing extravagant in Bacon's boast, 'I have taken all knowledge to be my province.' And men were not content with 'knowing' alone. They wanted to be men of action. That is why men like Sir Philip Sidney and Sir

Walter Raleigh, in addition to intellectual gifts, were great soldiers and navigators. Sir Walter Raleigh's versatility only typifies the excitement and energy of deed, the lively movement of thought which quickened mind and body, and resulted now in a voyage to Virginia, now in a conspiracy, now in a sonnet, and now a history of the universe.

—He was typical of his generation in the range of his activities; he knew as much of military affairs, of shipping, of farming, of medicine, of statecraft. Aubrey tells us that 'he studied most in his sea voyages; where he carried always a trunk of bookes along with him, and had nothing to divert him.'

People were discovering new lands and founding new empires. They believed that the world was large and wonderful, and they wanted to explore it and exhaust its marvels. "To hear of the marvels of the great world which had suddenly expanded around them, any Elizabethan audience, like Desdemona, 'would seriously incline,' and love the traveller, as Shakespeare loved his Moor 'for the dangers he had passed'" (Lamborn and Harrison).

The eagerness and curiosity of the Elizabethan were not merely intellectual. He had a great physical zest for life as well. He was fond of physical education; he had an enthusiastic love for music, and he was passionately fond of gardening and field sports. "Hunting and hawking must have been pastimes shared by the poor, for the innumerable technical terms used by Shakespeare would not have been tolerated by the groundlings unless they had understood and enjoyed them," and Shakespeare himself must have acquired his familiar knowledge of these things as a poor man joining in the sports of the landed gentry. A hunt was not then a corporation or limited liability company, but each squire kept his hounds and hunted them; and the tenants and labourers on the estate must have known them by name, as Shakespeare knew Merriman, Clowder, Silver, Belman, and Echo."

It was an age, therefore, of great energy and versatility. The people delighted in bloodshed, violence, quick and brutal passion. That is why we should not feel surprised to find that Ben Jonson actually killed his adversary in a duel, without any remorse, and Marlowe was stabbed in a tavern brawl.

The Elizabethans loved to witness such sports as bear-baiting and bull-baiting, and their dramas also represented scenes of bloodshed and torture. The inhumanity of a Shylock, the tortures of a Gloster were not at all revolting to an Elizabethan audience. They had learnt to look upon these as something of everyday occurrence. The key note of Elizabethan life is unbounded energy, exuberance, versatility and variety. These qualities are to be found in the dramatic literature of the age also, and that is why we find the Elizabethan drama could not accept the restraints and restrictions of the Classical Drama.

### 3. SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

The London in which Shakespeare lived and wrote was a small, dingy, insanitary, ill lighted place of about a hundred thousand, or according to Brandes, three hundred thousand people. The streets were narrow and congested not with wheel traffic, for coaches had been imported from Germany towards the close of the century, but with people, on foot, on horseback, or in litters. These streets had been recently paved with stone but they were not yet lighted. The city was surrounded with trenches, walls, and gates, the houses were made of wood, with high gables and red roofs, distinguished not by numbers but by means of projecting signs. The interior of the rooms was hung with richly embroidered tapestries, the floors were strewn with rushes, for there were no carpets. The bed-rooms were spacious, but bedsteads were a luxury, which very few could afford. Shakespeare's maternal grandfather, Richard Arden, who was sufficiently rich and well to do, had only one bedstead in the house between himself and his seven daughters. Wooden benches did duty for chairs, and fireplaces had only recently begun to be substituted for open hearths. People slept on straw mattresses, with a billet of wood under their heads and a fur rug over them. The windows were of horn and lattice work—glass was still very rare.

The central points of London at that time were the newly erected Exchange and St. Paul's Church, which was regarded not only as the Cathedral of the city, but as a meeting place for idlers, a sort of club where the news of the day was discussed. The streets were usually full of hawkers proclaiming their wares, and boy 'prentices inviting customers. The

Thames was the chief highway and thousands of boats could be seen threading their way, amid the watermen's shrill cries of "Eastward hoe!" or "Westward hoe!" There was as yet only one bridge over the Thames the mighty London Bridge, situated not far from that which now bears the name. The Queen would sometimes sail on the Thames in her magnificent gondola, followed by a crowd of gaily decorated boats, at other times she could be seen driving on the streets in her huge state carriage.

The dinner-hour was usually eleven in the morning; the dishes were rich and heavy and the repasts would often last an inordinate time. Observers from foreign countries have remarked upon the prodigality of English diet in the Elizabethan age. "These Englishmen," said a Spanish ambassador, "have their houses made of sticks and dirt, but they fare (i.e., eat) commonly as well as the king." "Our tables," wrote Harrison, "are oftentimes more plentifully garnished than those of other nations! many strange herbs, plant and annual fruits are daily brought unto us from the Indies, Americas, Taprobane, Canary Isles and all parts of the world." And then Harrison goes on to give a most epicurean description of the English tables.

"White meats, milk, butter and cheese are now reputed as food appurtenant only to the inferior sort, while such as are more wealthy do feed upon the flesh of all kinds of cattle accustomed to be eaten, all sorts of fish, taken upon our coasts and in our fresh rivers, and such diversity of wild and tame fowls as are either bred in our island or brought over unto us from other countries of the main. In number of dishes and change of meat the nobility of England do most exceed, sith there is no day that passeth over their heads wherein they have not only beef, mutton, veal, lamb, kid, pork, cony, capon, pig, or so many of these as the season yieldeth but also some portion of the red or fallow deer, besides great variety of fish and wild fowl. And as all estates (classes) do exceed herein, I mean for strangeness and number of costly dishes, so these forget not to use the like excess in wine." No wonder that Englishmen travelling abroad congratulated themselves that they were better fed at home; nor should we feel surprised that people 'going ordinarily to dinner at eleven before noon' 'do sit commonly

till two or three of the clock at afternoon, so that with many it is hard matter to rise from the table to go to evening prayer, and return from thence some time enough for supper"—i. e., between five and six in the evening. With the accession of James I prodigality sank into grossness, but even he could boast of the hospitality of the English nation 'for which we were famous above all the countreys in the world'. Tea had not yet come into vogue, but tobacco had been recently brought from America by Sir Walter Raleigh. Shakespeare has not made any references to tobacco in his plays, but gallants are known to have smoked their pipes, while witnessing the plays. Tobacco shops were rapidly springing up, and, like the taverns, they formed an important meeting place for all classes of people.

Domestic utensils were very mean. So late as 1591, wooden trenchers, platters and spoons were in common use. Tin and silver were just coming into vogue. Table-knives had been in general use since about 1563, but forks were still unknown in Shakespeare's time. The Englishmen of that age ate with their fingers. Forks seem to have been introduced in England by one Coryat who had seen them, for the first time, in Italy.

'I observed a custome in all those Italian Cities and Townes through which I passed, that is, not used in any other country I saw in my travels. The Italian and also most strangers that are commorant in Italy doe alwaies at their meales use a little forke when they cut their meate. The reason of this their curiosity is because the Italian cannot by any means indure to have his dish touched with fingers, seeing all men's fingers are not alike cleane.'—*Coryat's Crudities*, ed. 1716; vol. 1, p. 105.

Coaches were introduced into England from Germany during the reign of Elizabeth. It added to the congestion of the narrow streets, which, says Fynes Morison, 'are almost stopped up with them'. Harrison has given a strangely modern picture of fashionable ladies with 'lap dogs to lie in their laps and lick their lips as they lie like young Dianas in their waggons and coaches'.

The sanitary arrangements of the city were very unsatisfactory. Epidemics would sweep away large numbers of the population. Consumption, small pox, ague were very

common Plague raged in London twice within Shakespeare's life-time, and once—during 1593 to 1594—the theatres had to be closed so as the infection might be prevented from spreading. Medical science was in a very crude state; and infant mortality very large. The belief in witchcraft and superstitions prevailed very widely. The medicines commonly prescribed by the average medical man were of the kind catalogued by Montaigne (Bk II. Chap. 57) 'the left foote of a tortoyze, the stale of a lizard, the tongue of an elephant, the liver of a mole, blood drawne from under the right wing of a white pigeon . . . some rattes pounded to small powder, and such other foolish trash, which rather seems to be magike spells or charmes than effects of any solide science'. Crude superstitions still prevailed and the Elizabethans took particular delight in gory spectacles. "Whippings, hangings, burnings, drawings, disembowellings, and mutilations were as common and apparently as attractive as bear-baiting and cock-fights." Even women and girls were publicly flogged.

The rapid growth of trade and industry led to the depopulation of villages and the over-population of the towns, particularly, of London, so that James I complained to his parliament in 1610 that 'with time, England will only be London, and the whole country be left waste'. To London came also the unemployed from the provinces, soldiers and sailors disbanded from the wars in Ireland and the Low Countries, refugees and outlaws from abroad, all armed with some kind of weapon, so that duels and street-brawls were quite a common sight, and it was not safe for a man to travel without a sword or some such weapon.

The common people, however, were poor, they had 'neither voice nor authority in the commonwealth, but are to be ruled and not to rule other'. All wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few persons only—"the gentility commonly provide themselves sufficiently of wheat for their own tables, whilst their household and poor neighbours in some shires are forced to content themselves with rye, barley, yea and in time of dearth, many with bread made of beans, peas or oats, or of all together and some acorns among".

Conveniences of life, however, were gradually multiplying. New houses, better furnished and more comfortable,

were being built. Costly furniture, tapestry and plate were coming into vogue. Harrison has thus described this rapid growth of conveniences in the town —

"There are old men yet dwelling in the village where I remain which have noted three things to be marvellously altered in England within their sound remembrance, and other three things too much increased. One is the multitude of chimneys lately erected, whereas in their young days there were not above two or three. The second is the great (although not general) amendment of lodging; for, said they, our fathers yea, and we ourselves also, have lain full oft upon straw pallets, on rough mats covered only with a sheet, under coverlets made of dogswain or hopharlots (I use their own terms) and a good round log under their heads instead of a bolster or pillow. Pillows (said they) were thought meet only for women in childbed. The third thing they tell of is the exchange of vessel, as of treene (wooden) platters into pewter, and wooden spoons into silver or tin. Inns were also rapidly springing up and no cost was spared to make them as comfortable as a house—'well furnished with naperie, bedding, and tapisterie, especiaillie with naperie (i. e., linen sheets, etc.)' A traveller could very well "use his inne as his owne house in England"

Another special feature of Elizabethan life was fondness for gorgeous dresses. Men and women alike wore jewels and precious stones wherever room could be found to display them—round their necks, in their ears, on their fingers and thumbs, on their wrists and the roses on their shoes. Raleigh sat for his picture in 'a white satin doublet, all embroidered with rich pearles, and a mighty rich chaine of great pearles about his neck, and the old servants have told me (says Aubrey) that the pearles were near as big as the painted ones'. People would sometimes sell their estates in order to buy rich dresses and costly jewels. The Queen herself was very fond of gorgeousness and display, and to be richly dressed was a means of attracting the Queen's attention and winning her favour. To what extent this fondness for dress was carried is clear from the following words of Harrison;

'Oh, how much cost is bestowed nowadays upon our bodies, and how little upon our souls! How many suits of apparel hath the one, and how little furniture hath the other!

How long time is asked in decking up of the first, and how little space left wherein to feed the latter !"

#### 4 SHAKESPEARE'S AUDIENCE

The spectators for whom Shakespeare wrote his plays were of most heterogenous kind. They included disbanded sailors and soldiers, ruffians and noisy vulgar men of the street, thieves and pickpockets on the one hand, and fashionable gallants, the so called literary critics and women of fashion on the other. The former kind generally sat or stood in the pit, while the latter would sit on the front rows of the tier or on the stage itself. There were boxes (or "rooms") meant for the better sort of spectators, officers, city merchants, who sometimes came with their wives. Ladies, however, always wore a mask of silk or velvet, partly for protection against sun and air, partly in order to blush unseen at the frivolous and often licentious things that were said upon the stage. Respectable women seldom visited the "public" theatres, they usually went to the "private" theatres.

The front rows were generally occupied by the kept mistresses of men of quality, and other gorgeously decked ladies who went to the playhouses in order to make acquaintance. Behind them sat the respectable citizens. And in the gallery above assembled rougher public composed of sailors, artisans, soldiers, and loose women of the lowest class.

"The frequenters of the pit," according to Brandes, with their coarse boisterousness, were the terror of the actors. They all had to stand—coal heavers and bricklayers, dock-labourers, serving-men and idlers. Refreshment sellers moved about among them, supplying them with sausages and ale, with apples and nuts. They ate and drank, drew corks, smoked tobacco, fought with each other, and often when they were out of humour, threw fragments of food and even stones, at the actors. Now and then they would come to loggerheads with fine gentlemen on the stage, so that the performance had to be interrupted and the theatre closed. The sanitary arrangements were of the most primitive description, and the groundlings resisted all attempts at reforms on the part of the management. When the evil smells became intolerable, juniper-berries were burnt by way of freshening the atmosphere."



There was no police to enforce order among the audiences. Brawls and quarrels would be quite common. Thieves and pickpockets would prow round the auditorium, whenever they were caught they would be tied to a post at the corner of a stage and beaten

This hybrid dramatic public went to the theatres primarily for amusement and sensation, yet somewhat also for information. Indeed, the theatre was the only place where they could get a glimpse of their country's past and present achievements. The printing press had already been invented and cheap books were available in fairly large numbers. But the public had not yet acquired the reading habit. Consequently, the theatre in Shakespeare's time filled not only the place it occupies now, but the place of the magazine, illustrated histories, biographies, and books of travel and even of the yellow journal. Nor was this combined desire for amusement and information anything new. For generations, the English public learned, while they enjoyed, from the miracle and mystery plays, and their knowledge of history had been derived from chronicle plays and moralities of the type of *Albion's Knight*

There was yet no proper dramatic technique in England. The audiences were not at all exacting either about plot construction or characterization. All that they wanted was a story interestingly told. His mood was delightfully childlike. He came, as a child comes, saying practically, "Tell me a story," and he cared not whether the story was old or new. What they demanded first of all in a play was story. That is why the dramatists wrote above all with the idea that "the play is the thing". The public came, eager for information as well as amusement, unprovided with information by many of the purveyors of news of the present time, came to the theatre day after day asking little more, if anything more, than to hear a story, new or renewed, interestingly told.

### 5. THE SHAKESPEAREAN THEATRE

For more than a hundred years before the first regular theatre was built in London, acting had been an established profession in England. Loosely formed companies of actors would tour round the country and give performances in the inn yards. Of course, the earliest scenic representations had been given by the Church and the Guilds; the earliest actors

were priests and choir-boys, who would give performances at periodical festivals only. Gradually from the days of Henry the Sixth onwards, members of the nobility began to entertain companies of actors and Henry VII and Henry VIII had their own private comedians. The public performances, however, given generally in the inn-yards were very unruly and undisciplined affairs. The audience was coarse, vulgar and unrefined, and while the players gave their performances, noisy quarrels, pickpocketing and immoral scenes would be practised among the audiences. The dramatic performances became so popular that they proved a serious menace to the religious and moral life of the country. It was a usual sight on Sundays to find that the churches were empty while the inn-yards were packed. Consequently, Parliament, towards the middle of the sixteenth century, forbade the performance of anything conflicting with the doctrines of the Church. In 1572 an Act was passed requiring all actors to attach themselves to "any Baron of the realme or towards any other honourable Personage of greater Degree," otherwise they "shall be taken, adjudged and deemed Rogues, Vagabondes and sturdy Beggars". This statute of 1572 only enforced an ancient custom, for during the Middle Ages most of the barons kept their bands of minstrels, who were sometimes allowed to 'go on tour'. The nobility regarded it as a mark of dignity, so when this new Act was passed, the barons felt honour bound to protect their 'servants', and the noblemen extended their patronage to various groups of actors by giving them cloaks bearing their arms, and allowing them to be known as their 'Men'. Thus many bands of players came to be known either as Lord of Leicester's Players, the Lord of Shrewsbury's Players, the Earl of Derby's Players and my Lord of Worcester's Players. The company to which Shakespeare attached himself was under the 'most distinguished patronage' of Lord Strange and were consequently known as Lord Strange's Men. At the death of Lord Strange in April 1594, they organized themselves and transferred their allegiance to Henry Carey, Baron Hundon, the Queen's cousin and Chamberlain, so that they could style themselves 'the Lord Chamberlain's Servants.' In 1603, on the accession of James I, they were taken over as The King's Players and thus came to be ranked as the first in the kingdom.

The Puritan opposition to plays continued and this prevented, for a long time, the establishment of any regular theatres in London. Stephen Gosson in his *Plays Confuted* (1579) railed at plays as

'the invention of the devil, the offerings of Idolatric, the pompe of worldlinges, the blossomes of vanities, the roote of Apostacy, foode of iniquitie, ryot and adulterie. Players are masters of vice, teachers of wantonnesse, spurres to impuritie, the somes of idlenesse'

As early as 1574 Queen Elizabeth had given permission to Lord Leicester's Servants to give dramatic representation of all sorts for the delectation of herself and lieges, both in London and elsewhere in England. But the City authorities, both in London and in the other towns, refused to permit the players to erect their theatres within the city boundaries. Even when they played in the city itself either in the great halls of the Guilds or in the open inn yards, they had to obtain the Lord Mayor's sanction for each individual performance, and to hand over half their receipts to the city treasury.

It was in 1576 that James Burbage, who had been granted a royal warrant authorizing him and four others servants of the Earl of Leicester to perform 'Comedies, Tragedies, Enterludes and Stage playes' in London and elsewhere, completed and opened the first London playhouse called *The Theatre*. This playhouse was built of timber on the model of the inns, but the yard was circular like the bear-baiting and bull-baiting rings. That is why Shakespeare referred to it as 'this wooden', and Jonson as 'this thronged round'. It was situated in Shoreditch, just outside the city boundary and it was here that Shakespeare's earliest plays were acted. Very shortly afterwards another play-house, called the Curtain was built in the same neighbourhood, and soon several others followed, on the Bankside, a disreputable quarter, south of the Thames, among the bear-gardens and bull-baiting rings, where the interference of the city fathers was not to be feared. The site where most of these theatres were built was a stretch of land the south of the Thames not belonging to the city but to the Bishop of Winchester, who saw no harm in making some profit from his land which was lying useless and unoccupied. Here lay the Bear-Gardens; there were numerous houses of ill fame, here arose the

different theatres, the "Hope", the "Swan", the "Rose", etc. When James Burbage's successor had to pull down *The Theatre*, in consequence of a law-suit, they employed the materials to erect on the Bishop of Winchester's land the celebrated Globe Theatre, which was opened in 1599. It was at the *Globe* that most of Shakespeare's plays were to be presented. It was circular, not hexagonal or octagonal, in shape, and was thatched, not tiled. It was destroyed by fire on June 29, 1613, when a piece of ordnance fired during the course of a performance set fire to the thatch and within an hour reduced the house to ashes. It was speedily rebuilt and stood till 1644, when it was pulled down. In the early years of the seventeenth century, theatre-building took such a start that in 1633 there were no few than nineteen permanent theatres in London. The average capacity of an Elizabethan playhouse was from three to twelve hundred spectators.

But the establishment of the theatres did very considerably vitiate the moral life of the city of London. As Brandes has remarked, "the theatre brought in its train a loose, frivolous and rowdy population. Around the playhouse, at the hours of performance, the narrow streets of that period became so crowded that business suffered in the shops, processions and funerals were obstructed; and perpetual causes of complaint arose. Houses of ill-fame, moreover, always clustered round a theatre, and, although the performance took place by day, there was always the danger of fire inseparable from theatres, and especially from wooden erection with thatched roofs."

By the close of the century, therefore, quite a number of theatres were established and several companies of actors, patronized by one nobleman or another, were giving performance—i. e., the companies of the Queen's Men, of Lord Strange, the Lord Admiral, the Earl of Sussex, the Earl of Pembroke, and the boy actors of St. Paul's Cathedral. There was keen competition among the various companies, the chief rivals of Shakespeare's company being the Lord Admiral's men, in which the famous actor Edward Alleyn acted, and who built the *Fortuna Theatre* in July 1601.

These theatres may be classified under three heads, and Shakespeare's plays are known to have been acted in all the

three types of theatres. The three types of theatres were—(i) the Court Stage at Whitehall and other royal palaces, (ii) the "private" theatres, e. g., the Paul's Singing School, the Salisbury Court, the Cockpit etc., and (iii) the "public" theatres, e. g. the Theatre, the Curtain, the Fortune, the Swan, the Globe, etc.

1. The Court Theatres Both Elizabeth and James I were great patrons of the drama, and plays used to be represented in the halls of their royal palaces by special command. A special stage of timber was erected at one end, and ascending tiers of seats round the walls accommodated the spectators, who were noblemen of the court or other notable personages especially invited for the show. The queen sat on a tapestried dais, either, in the middle of the hall or on the stage itself. The stage was lavishly equipped and the actors wore the costliest dresses. There was no movable scenery, but "scenes" painted on cloth and representing all the localities in the play were set up round the stage at the outset and the players would move from the one to the other in succession. Sometimes 'actual trees brought to the Court on carts would be planted to stand for a forest. Huge erections of carpentry with men inside visible through the openings, would stand for a castle with its garrison or a prison with its captives, or an assembly with its senators'. The performances were given by night, and a profusion of candles and torches would make the palace 'as bright as day'. Plays offered for presentation at Court were subjected to the Censorship of the Master of the Revels who would sometimes return the M. S. to be 'reformed'. Very often, such plays as had been already approved by the audiences of the popular theatres, were selected for presentation at Court."—From the Introduction to my edition of *Coriolanus*

2 and 3. The "Private" theatres were so called to indicate that plays were originally "shewed in the Private house of any nobleman, citizen, or gentleman". At one time the distinction was rather obscure—the real difference was not that admission to the private theatres was by invitation and to the public ones by payment. Even in the "Private" theatres any one who liked could secure a seat by paying for it, and a nobleman could hire any theatre, whether private or public, and engage the company to give a performance for him and

his invited guests. The real distinction was that the private theatres were designed on the model of the ancient Town Halls or Guildhalls in which representations used to be given before special buildings had been erected. The public theatres, on the other hand, were constructed on the lines of the inn-yard. The private theatres were fully roofed, and so that they could be used both in the daytime and by artificial light at night. They had also seats in every part of the house including the pit. In the public theatres, as in ancient Greece, only the stage was roofed, the auditorium open to the sky, so that performances could only be given by daylight. Here plays were acted while rain and snow and fog enwrapped the spectators. "As the prototype of these theatres was the old innyard, in which some of the spectators stood, while others were seated in the open galleries running all round it, the parterre, which retained the name of *yard*, was here devoted to the poorest and roughest of the public, who stood throughout the performance, while the Galleries (*Scaffolds*), running along the walls in two or three tiers, offered seats to wealthier playgoers of both sexes"—(*Brandes*). The stage both in the private and public theatres was constructed on the same design, but whereas in the "private" theatres the stage was built on a dais extending across the whole breadth at one end, in the "public" theatres, it projected into the auditorium, so that the spectators sat on all sides of the stage, very much as they do in a modern circus. Very often the same plays would be acted in "private" as well as "public" theatres.

The first "private" theatre—the 'first' Blackfriars theatre—was built in 1576, the very year in which the first 'public' play house *The Theatre* had been built by Burbage. The second private theatre—the 'second' Blackfriars was founded by Burbage in the same building in 1589, and Shakespeare's company would move to this theatre during the winter.

Elizabethan plays began at two or three in the afternoon and lasted for two hours or two hours and a half. That is why Shakespeare has called his play "this two hours' traffic of the stage". Shakespeare's auditors, therefore, came to the theatre not at the end of an arduous and deadening day of business or after an elaborate dinner ending only just before the performance, but in the clear light of the daylight, when they were fresh and full of activity. This was one reason

why they wanted violent and quick scenes on the stage—horror, bloodshed, tortures, etc.

The days when plays were to be performed were announced by the hoisting of a flag on the roof of the play-house. The beginning of the performance was announced by three trumpet-blasts. The curtain which separated the stage from the auditorium, did not rise, but parted in the middle, and at the third trumpet blast, it parted and the performance began. At the commencement of the play appeared the actor who played the part of the Prologue. He was dressed in a long cloak, with a laurel wreath on his head, probably because this duty was originally performed by the poet himself. At the conclusion of the play, the Clown danced a jig and sang some small comic jingle to the accompaniment of a small drum and flute. The Epilogue consisted of, or ended in a prayer for the Queen, in which all the actors took part, kneeling,

The Queen herself did not visit these theatres—there was no Royal Box and the public was too mixed and unruly. But whenever she liked, she sent for the players to perform at Court, and Lord Chamberlain's Company to which Shakespeare belonged, was very often invited to perform before her, especially upon such festivals as Christmas Day, Twelfth Night etc. It was for the latter occasion that Shakespeare is believed to have written his play, *Twelfth Night*. Shakespeare himself is known to have acted before the Queen in two comedies presented at Greenwich Palace at Christmas, 1594. The Queen would generally pay £ 10 for a performance at Court. Soon the Queen formed companies of her own, the so-called Children's Companies, recruited from the choir-boys of the Chapels Royal. These half-grown, sweet singing boys were specially fitted to represent female characters and won great favour both at Court and with the public. One such troupe, consisting of the choir-boys of St Paul's was at one time, a serious rival to Shakespeare's company, as may be gathered from the bitter reference in *Hamlet* (II, 2).

*Hamlet* Do they (the players) hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? Are they so followed?

*Rosencrantz* No, indeed, they are not

*Ham* How comes it? Do they grow rusty?

Ros. Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace : but there is, Sir, an aery of children, little eyasses, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for't : these are now the fashion , and so berattle the common stages (so they call them), that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills, and dare scarce come thither.

Ham. Do the boys carry it away ?

Ros. Ay, that they do, my lord ; Hercules and his load too \*\*

No women ever appeared on the stage, the female parts being taken by boys. Cleopatra alluded to this practice in the following lines of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

"The quick comedians  
Extemporally will stage us, and present  
Our Alexandrian revels. Antony  
Shall be brought, drunken forth and I shall see  
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness  
I the posture of a whore."

This was also the reason why Shakespeare very often put his heroines in male disguises, as, for example, Viola in *Twelfth Night* and Rosalind in *As You Like It*.

There were no tickets, and rates of admission differed at the various theatres. A penny was the usual price of admission to standing-room in the pit although between 1600 and 1640, it ranged from a penny to sixpence. Gallants would hire stools to sit on the stage and pay from sixpence to a shilling. The money would be collected by gatherers who would hold out a "box" in which the money would be dropped by the visitors. The most fashionable seats were on the stage itself, approached not by the ordinary entrances, but through the player's tiring-room. "There sat the amateurs, the noble patrons of the theatre, Essex, Southampton, Pembroke, Rutland, these snobs, upstarts, and fops took their places on chairs or stools : if there were not seats enough, they spread their cloaks upon the pine-sprigs that strewed the boards, and, ... lay upon them. There, too, sat the author's rivals, the dramatic poets, who had free admissions ; and there, lastly, sat the shorthand writers, commissioned by piratical book-sellers, who, under pretence of making critical notes, secretly took

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\*A figure of Hercules with the globe on his shoulders



down the dialogue—men who were a nuisance to the players and, as a rule, a thorn in the side to the poets, but to whom posterity no doubt owes the preservation of many plays which would otherwise have been lost. All these notabilities on the stage carry on half-audible conversations, and make the servants of the theatre bring them drinks and light their pipes, while the actors can with difficulty thread their way among them." (Brandes)

## 6 THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE.

In earlier days, before regular playhouses were established—the stage was a movable scaffold or platform. "In the earliest instances," as I have written elsewhere, "the town guild is used to give their representations on pageant wagons which could be easily moved from one place to another. When acting became more widespread and passed to the innyards, the stage was an improvised scaffold set up at one end of the inn-yard, with a curtain hung at the back. When regular theatres were constructed in London, very little improvement was made as regards the devices of the stage. The stage was a raised platform, protruding into the auditorium. It was divided into two parts by a screw, in which were two doorways, opening out of the actors' tiring room. At the back was a recess, which could be variously used as the tomb of Juliet or the bedchamber of Desdemona. There was also a projecting hood or balcony, technically known as the "Heavens" which could be used for Juliet's balcony or any scene referred to in the plays as 'above'. On the top of it all was a turret from which a flag would be flown on the days when performances were to be given." Musicians used to sit under the stage.

There was no movable scenery before 1660, and modern mechanical devices were entirely unknown. The walls of the stage were either hung with loose tapestries or quite bare, so that the wooden doors leading to the players' tiring-rooms at the back were clearly visible. In battle scenes, whole armies would enter triumphant or be driven off the stage in confusion and exit through a single door. When a tragedy was to be acted, the stage was usually hung with black, when a comedy was being presented, the hangings were blue. Rude machines were employed to raise or lower actors through the stage; trap-doors were in frequent use on the stage. Movable

scenery and decorations were introduced for the first time at court entertainments by Inigo Jones, but they remained unknown at the popular playhouses till after the Restoration.

The balcony was approached on each side by a pretty broad flight of steps. Senates, councils, and princes with their courts would sit here. In the middle of the stage there were two wooden pillars, supporting the balcony. Melancholy or contemplative actors would lean against these pillars.

The audience sat on all sides of the stage and so the arras or background alone could be used to indicate scenery by means of crude pictures painted on cloth. Scenery of the modern kind began in the private performances given to James I. At a performance in a Christ Church Hall, Oxford, in 1605, when the king visited the University, 'the stage was built close to the upper end of the Hall and adorned with stately pillars, which pillars, would turn about, by reason whereof, with the help of other painted clothes, their stage did vary three times in the acting of one tragedy'. But the common play-houses were mostly devoid of scenery, and as Jusserand has pointed out, this deficiency of painted scenery provided Shakespeare with the occasion for much of his wonderful poetry. It caused him to make up for the deficiency of the scenery by his wonderful descriptions of landscapes, castles and wild moors. All that poetry would have been lost had he painted scenery at his disposal,

But, although the Elizabethan theatre was devoid of scenery, there was a good deal of theatrical 'property' as the records of Philip Henslowe, the famous theatre manager, show. Extravagant sums of money were spent on the costumes and dresses of the actors. The English stage plays were famous in Europe for the money spent upon them, Coryat in his *Cruities* thus compares them with the Venetian Drama: 'I was at one of their play-houses, where I saw a comedy acted, the house is very beggarly and base in comparison of our stately playhouses in England. Neither can their actors compare with ours for apparel'. Costumes were not, however, designed with any reference to the period in which the play was set. "Shakespeare was no archaeologist, as the mediæval artists who gave us the wall-paintings and sculpture of our churches represented Pilate's Roman soldiers in plate armour, so his Romans, in *Coriolanus*, for example,

carry pistols, are put in the stocks, say grace before meat and generally behave and look like the Elizabethans who watched them perform. Costume was a means of indicating rank and office more than time and place: it was meant to reveal the characters rather than the setting of the story." (Lamborn and Harrison) Shakespeare's peasants appeared apparelled like princes. This fondness for rich dresses pervaded not only the Elizabethan stage but Elizabethan life as well, as we have seen above. Above all, it distinguished the sex of the players, for all the female parts were played by men and boys in women's dress.

## 7. THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE AS CONTRASTED WITH THE MODERN STAGE

From the above account, the reader must have noticed that the Elizabethan stage was essentially different from the modern stage. In the first place, the modern stage is a picture stage severed from the audience both by the frame and the footlights. To be more correct, it is a moving picture, and to take their successive places in it the actors can emerge, whether from the back of the stage or from the wings, by more or less unlimited entrances. The Elizabethan stage on the contrary, presented to the audience a kind of large pedestal on which was posed a group of statuary, of moving statuary right in the middle of them, which successive actors could join only by emerging from a door in the rear part of the stage. The rear part of the stage was curtained off from the main stage, and could often be used as a bedchamber or in some other capacity. In that case, the main actors should be grouped on the main stage and the rear stage would appear like a small framed picture very much like what the modern stage appears now.

The principal difference, however, between the modern and the Elizabethan stage is that there were no curtains on the latter as we are accustomed to see in our own time. The only curtain on the Elizabethan stage was that which could be drawn across the comparatively small rear stage. Elizabethan dramatist could not ring either up or down on a full stage. He could certainly, by using the backstage, disclose two people playing chess, or some one lying in bed, or the like, or at the end of the play, he could concentrate three or four characters in the rear stage and have the curtain drawn

in front of them. But for the rest he had to bring all his characters on, and take them off, in full view of the audience. The only way, therefore, in which breaks between scenes and acts could be indicated would be by a temporary complete emptiness of the stage. Another method of indicating the close of a scene was the rhymed couplet, with which we find so many Shakespearean scenes ending. The rhymed couplet is a sort of code to tell that the scene is ending, but it is something more. It is a sort of emotional curtain; it is often very stiff and barely relevant. This stiffness and irrelevance are not due to laziness or incompetence on the part of the dramatist. They are quite deliberate, for the enunciation of the couplet marks the dropping of something quite artificial between the spectators' apprehension of the action and emotions of one scene and the action and emotions of the next.

Thirdly, the Elizabethan plays were acted by daylight. The only way, therefore, to create an illusion of moonlight or darkness, was by words and not by artificial electric light as on the modern stage. To this necessity we owe a great deal of lovely and powerful poetry in Shakespeare's plays, e. g. the passage in *The Merchant of Venice* where the bank is described as the sleeping moonlight's couch.\* Much of this poetry seems unnecessary to the modern reader, an intrusion of lyric on drama. But when the plays were being presented on a daylight stage, without any help from the electrician's foot-lights or the switch-board, these passages of pure poetry had a dramatic purpose.

Fourthly, the Elizabethan stage jutted into the auditorium and was surrounded on three sides by spectators. There was, therefore, greater contact between the actors and his audience than we can ever have on the modern stage, where the actors are quite cut off and separate from the audience.

Lastly, we should remember that in Elizabethan stage productions, the parts of women were played by boys. The training of the boy actors who took female parts must have been unusually perfect, otherwise no dramatist should have ever thought of creating such characters as Juliet, Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, Miranda, etc. Mr. Granville Barker has pointed out that Shakespeare does seem to avoid anything that might arouse a sensation of either the ridiculous or the

distasteful. "There is, when one comes to examine the point, quite extraordinarily little intimate love making in Shakespeare. How often, that is how seldom, do we want to insert the stage direction—'They Kiss'? It will be found, I think, that Shakespeare almost always interposes some sort of barrier between his lovers. Either the girl is disguised as a boy (as with Rosalind and Viola) or there is a physical barrier as the balcony in *Romeo and Juliet*, or an intellectual barrier, as with Beatrice and Benedick, who are always at wit's rapier's distance, and so on. Also, as a minor point, Shakespeare uses the circumstances for occasional effect, as when Cleopatra thinks of a squeaking Cleopatra boying her greatness, or Rosalind delivers an epilogue much of which is pointless on the modern stage."

#### 8. ELIZABETHAN ACTORS AND PLAYWRIGHTS

The number of actors attached to any Elizabethan Company was not large—not more as a rule, than eight or ten, never, probably, above a dozen. The actors were of different grades. First there were the *sharers*, i. e., those who had a share in the proprietorship of the company in which they acted. They also managed the affairs of the company, and reserved to themselves one half of the gross income, the expenses of the theatre and the salaries of the minor actors being all defrayed out of the other half. Shakespeare himself was such a *sharer* in the two theatres with which he was connected. He made huge profits in this capacity, his receipts from the Globe Theatre alone being estimated at £400 per year. Ratsey must have Shakespeare's example in mind when he advised a young player 'Get thee to London, and when thou feelest thy purse well lined, buy thee some place or lordship in the country, that growing weary of playing, thy money may there bring thee to dignity and reputation'.

The second class of actors were those employed at regular salaries, and lastly, there was the lowest class of hirelings known as boys or apprentices who belonged to individual actors, and were sometimes sold by one actor to another.

There was no manager. The actors themselves decided what plays should be performed. They also distributed the parts and divided the receipts according to an established scale. The management had the non sharer actors and authors at a great disadvantage. It was a fixed policy with

them to keep the actors and authors in their debt and so in their power. A favourite trick was to disband the company and then re-engage the same actors on lower terms. Copies of agreements between the proprietors and the actors have come down to us and they reveal the stringent methods adopted by the former in order to keep the latter under control. For instance, if an actor should fail to be 'ready apparelled' at 'three of the clocke in the afternoon' when the play was timed to begin, he was to forfeit 3 s., if late for a rehearsal, 12 d., if 'overcome with drink at the time when he ought to play', ten shillings, if unable to play at all, 20 shillings.

The training of an Elizabethan actor was long and careful. It began at the early age of ten and by the time an actor attained the age of majority, he had acquired a wide experience in various roles under the guidance of the best actors, musicians, and dancing masters of the time. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that English actors were famous all over Europe, and they would sometimes form small groups and travel abroad. In such cases they invariably created a very favourable impression on Continental audiences, Fynes Morison, who had seen most of the great cities of Europe, declared even second-rate English actors to be better than foreigners.—

'As there be, in my opinion, more Plays in London than in all the partes of the worlde I have seen, so doe these players or Comedians excell all other in the worlde. Whereof I have seen some stragling broken Companyes that passed into Netherland and Germany, followed by the people from one towne to another, though they understood not their wordes, only to see their action, yea merchants at Fayres bragged more to have seen them, than of the good marketts they made.'

Shakespeare himself did not attain very great eminence as an actor—"fortunately," says Brandes, "for if he had, he would probably have found very little time for writing. He appears to have played characters of the second order, he played the Ghost in his own *Hamlet*, old Adam in *As You Like It*, and old Knowell in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*. Tradition relates that he once played his own Henry IV at court, and that the Queen, in passing over the

stage dropped her glove, as a mark of favour, which Shakespeare handed back to her with these words —

'And though now bent on this high embassy,  
Yet stoop we to take up our cousin's glove.'

We must now conclude our survey of Shakespeare's age and theatre by glancing briefly upon the circumstance under which the Elizabethan playwright worked. The Elizabethan age was the age of playwriting, just as the present age is the age of journalism and public speaking. An average English man of Elizabeth's time, who had any pretensions to culture, could write a tolerable play. But the training of an Elizabethan playwright, like that of an Elizabethan actor was long and arduous. In the earlier stages he had to serve a period of apprenticeship. He began by adapting older plays and collaborating with well known playwrights. Shakespeare himself collaborated with Marlowe and Kyd in the beginning; and in the first and second parts of *Henry VI*, he probably made over, with Christopher Marlowe, work in the first instance by Marlowe, Greene, and Peele. Sometimes even three or four novices would work together, apparently sometimes collaborating act by act, sometimes taking each man an act to himself. Besides, there was always a great demand for plays, as the playgoers wanted something new. Consequently, a large number of old plays were adapted and refurbished and this work would keep the younger dramatists busy and employed. The Elizabethan playgoers understood little or nothing of dramatic technique. All they wanted was a good story interestingly told. They did not understand much of characterization or plot construction.

"Incident these men understood, the related incident which is plot they had begun to understand, and they were steadily making essays at characterization." Before Shakespeare, the drama in England had not emerged into its distinctive shape, but beginning had already been made and Shakespeare finally evolved a type of drama which is the greatest heritage of the English nation.

The Elizabethan dramatists really lived in the theatres. Many of them were also actors; and therefore they could visualize their material not merely as dramatists but also as actors. The dramatists usually confined their labours entirely, or almost entirely, to some one company. They did

not write for many companies, some of which the dramatist of to day never sees in his plays, but for a company so well known to them that even as they wrote, they could hear the very voices of the men and lads who would play, their heroes and heroines. In fact, very often a dramatist created characters to suit particular actors in his company. Thus the songs in the *Twelfth Night* are believed to have been introduced because, at that time, there was in Shakespeare's company a boy actor who could sing very beautifully. The playwrights also knew their public as thoroughly as the modern tradesman knows his regular customers. The spectators sat surrounding the stage and the playwrights as well as the actors knew them very well. Actors, playwrights and spectators thus formed a large family; and it is not surprising that Elizabethan plays proved so eminently successful, when acted. They were essentially plays meant to be acted, and not for the study, even the poetry of these plays was introduced due to the exigencies of the stage-conditions of those days.

Every playhouse had a large repertory of dramas and gave a different piece each afternoon. Long runs of the same play were not appreciated by the public of Shakespeare's age, consequently we find that there was a great demand for plays. The usual time taken for writing a play was from four to six weeks and the usual price of a play was between six and eight pounds. We have record of Daburne agreeing to write a play between the 24th of December and the 10th. of February following. In the prologue to *Volpone* Jonson speaks of five weeks as the time usually spent in composing a play. The chief criterion in selecting a play was 'Is the story likely to act?'

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## INTRODUCTION TO HAMLET

**Date of composition** The authorized Text of *Hamlet* is based on (1) a Quarto edition, published in 1604, and (2) The First Folio of 1623, where the play follows *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*. The Quarto of 160 has the following title page:—



"The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, *Prince of Denmarke*. By William Shakespeare Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much again as it was according to the true and perfect coppie At London, Printed by I. R. for N. L. and are to be sold at his shoppe under Saint Dunston's Church in Fleetstreet 1604"

The two texts are derived from independant sources. Neither is a true copy of the author's manuscript. The Quarto edition is larger than the Folio version, and is essentially more valuable, on the other hand the Folio version contains a few passages which are not found in the Quarto and seems to be more accurate in transcription. The two editions might well be two distinct acting versions of Shakespeare's perfect text.

The 1604 edition is generally known as the Second Quarto, to distinguish it from one which appeared the previous year.

"The Tragical Historie of Hamlet *Prince of Denmarke* by William Shakespeare As it hath been diverse times acted by his Highnesse servan's in the cittie of London as also in the two Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elsewhere At London printed for N. L. and John Trundell. 1604."

No copy of this Quarto was known to be extant until Sir Henry Bynbury discovered in 1823 a small Quarto, barbarously cropped, and very ill-bound, containing some dozen Shakespearian plays. The last page of the play was missing. It became the property of the Duke of Devonshire for the sum of £230.

In 1856 another copy was bought from a student of Trinity College, Dublin, by a Dublin book dealer for one shilling, and sold by him for £70. It is now in the British Museum. In this copy the title page is lacking, but it supplies the missing last page of the Devonshire Quarto.

It may be noted that the entry in the Stationers' Registers in connection with the publication of the 1603 Quarto states that it was first Acted by the Lord Chamberlayne his servants. It was in 1603 that the Lord Chamberlain's Servants became the King's Players and the Quarto states that the play had been acted by His Highness' Servants.

An examination of the First Quarto brings to light the following among the chief differences—(1) The difference in length. 2143 lines as against 3719 lines in the later Quarto, (2) the mutilation or omission of many passages, which reveal Shakespeare's genius in the blending of psychological insight with imagination and fancy, (3) absurd misplacement and maiming of lines; distortion of words and phrases; (4) confusion in the order of scenes, (5) difference in characterization, e. g. the Queen's avowed innocence, and her active collaboration in the plots against her guilty husband, (6) this episode is brought out in a special scene between Horatio and the Queen, omitted in the later version, (7) The names of some of the characters are not the same as in the subsequent editions Corambis and Montano for Polonius and Reynolds.

The First Quarto leads to the conclusion that it was a pirated edition from shorthand notes, taken by an incompetent stenographer during the performance of the play. Thomas Heywood refers to this method of obtaining plays in the prologue to his *If you know not Me, You know No Bodie*

"This did throng the Seats, the Boxes, and the Stage  
So much, that some by Stenography drew  
The plot put it in print (scarce one word true)

The main question at issue is the relation of this piratical version to Shakespeare's work. One view is that it is an imperfect production of an old *Hamlet* written by Shakespeare in his youth, and revised by him in his maturer years. It is maintained by others that both the First and Second Quartos represent the same version, all the differences being due to carelessness and incompetence. A third view—it is now supposed to be correct—is that the first Quarto is a garbled version of an old-fashioned play of *Hamlet*, written by some other dramatists and revised to a certain extent by Shakespeare about the year 1602, the conclusion being that the First Quarto is the original *Hamlet* story and the Second Quarto is a reorientation of the original story.

It is generally agreed that the First Quarto is a pirated edition. It seems to have been based on the shorthand notes of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* performed in 1601 or 1602 on the Globe stage. Though its readings may have no independent authority, some may be relevant to the Textual

history of *Hamlet*, and many may help to corroborate readings in the other and better texts. It has, on the other hand, fuller stage directions.

The title page of the Second Quarto makes it clear that this edition was intended to supersede the First Quarto. It is dated 1604. It is true again that a version of *Hamlet*, recognised as Shakespeare's, was in existence in 1602, for the entry in the *Stationers' Registers* is dated 1602. The play is not mentioned in the list of Shakespeare's tragedies given by Merz in *Pulladis Tansa*, 1598. The presumable date for *Hamlet*, is 1602. The internal evidence seems to point to such a date for its composition. *Hamlet* follows immediately after *Julius Caesar*. There are references to Caesar in the play itself. Polonius says, "I did exact Julius Caesar, I was killed i' the capital, Brutus killed me". The supposed date for *Julius Caesar* is 1600-1601. In II ii Hamlet discusses the condition of the theatre.

Hamlet. How chances it they travel? Their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

Rosencrantz. I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.

Shakespeare seems to have his own company in mind in this discussion. The following facts should be recalled here: (1) in 1601 Shakespeare's company was in disgrace because of its share in the Essex conspiracy, (2) during this year the children of the chapel Royal were acting at Blackfriars, (3) towards the end of the year the Globe Company was "travelling" (on a provincial tour).

#### Sources of the Play

The ultimate source of the play is the *Historia Danica* of the Saxo Grammaticus (i.e. the Lettered), Denmark's first writer of importance, who lived at the close of the Twelfth century. The first edition of his work appeared in 1514, the second, in 1534, and the third in 1576. The tale of Hamlet is contained in the third and fourth books, is the most striking of all Saxo's mythical hero-stories. Not only did Shakespeare immortalize the story, but Goethe, recognizing its dramatic possibilities, thought of treating the subject dramatically on the basis of Saxo's narrative. Already in the fifteenth century the story was well known in the North

"trolled far and wide in popular song." It did not reach England until a French version appeared in Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*, the Hamlet story occurs in the fifth volume, published in 1570, and again in 1581, 1582, 1591, etc. Goggin writes, "Belleforest made no material alteration in the narrative of Saxo, and it is probably through this French version that the story reached England, Belleforest's first four volumes having been translated into English in 1566—7 by William Painter in his *Palace of Pleasure*".

In Saxo's *Amleth* there is at least the framework of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*—the murder, of the father by an uncle; the mother's incestuous marriage with the murderer, the son's feigned madness in order to execute revenge, these are the vague originals of Ophelia and Polonius, the meeting of mother and son, the voyage to England,—all these familiar elements are found in the old tale. Then again, the ghost, the play-scene, and the culmination in the death of the hero, as well as objects of revenge—these elements are all derived from the Elizabethan Drama of Vengeance.

A few points may be examined here in detail. Belleforest, in borrowing and expanding the story of Hamlet, refers to Amleth's over great melancholy. Shakespeare makes melancholy the keynote to Hamlet's character. There are two other points—viz., that Gerath and Fengan, as Amleth's mother and uncle, had committed adultery before the murder and that Amleth and the fair mistress were lovers. Shakespeare adopts the suggestions for the working out of the story, but leaves the relations between Claudius and Gertrude before the murder purposely vague; and so also the relations between Hamlet and Ophelia are not clearly defined. Shakespeare takes the bare outline of the story, and then develops it in his own way, giving it a new meaning by his psychological insight and imagination. Taine has said that Elizabethan Renaissance was a Renaissance of the Saxon genius from this point of view it is significant that its crowning glory should be the presentment of a typical Northern hero (Hamlet)—an embodiment of the Northern character, "dark and true and tender is the North".

There is the question of the lost *Hamlet* with which Shakespeare is presumed to have been acquainted. The lost play of Hamlet is ascribed to Kyd. Shakespeare's

company might have desired a recasting of the Hamlet story since Kyd's version was so popular or Shakespeare just obeyed the spirit of the times in re-writing the story of Hamlet. Nash made sarcastic references to Kyd's *Hamlet play*, from which it will appear that it was a typical "blood and thunder" tragedy, based on the revenge motive, full of Senecan rant and moralizing and crude horrors. Though Shakespeare's Hamlet was lifted to a higher plane of thought and reflection, traces of Kyd's influence are here and there in it—the heaps of the dead on the stage in the last scene recalling Seneca and Kyd.

Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* also influenced Shakespeare, it is another Senecan tragedy with the revenge motive. In the *Spanish Tragedy* a father avenges the murder of his son, and it has a ghost and a play within the play. The crudities of the Spanish tragedy give way to a psychological motivation of character and incident in *Hamlet*, to a delicate handling of the supernatural, and to tragic passion and pathos.

Dover Wilson supposes an Italian source for Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, for we find that Claudius depends on a subtle use of poisoning as a means of getting rid of those who are in his way—and this seems to suggest Italian source—the use of poniard and poison being very popular in the Renaissance Italy. Dover Wilson writes, "we do not know what it was but we can, I think, be certain that it existed. Of the circumstances and method of the murder of Hamlet's father, upon which so much hangs, and which are twice detailed, first in the account which the ghost renders of his own death, and again in the Gonzago play or rather in the dumb-show which precedes it, there is no hint in either Saxo or Belleforest. The Danish story does not mention poison, sleep or orchard. On the contrary, Belleforest expressly states that the deed was done by bloody violence in the banquetting hall of the palace, while Amleth's father sat at meals. On the other hand, the *Murder of Gonzago* bears all the marks of being founded upon an Italian original, and I see no reason for doubting that Hamlet's words at 3 2 262, 'the story is extant and written in very choice Italian,' were substantially correct. Indeed, there are even indications of a historical foundation for the tale, since according to Dowdon, 'In 1538 the Duke of Urbino, married to a Gonzago was

murdered by Lingi Gonzago, who dropped poison into his ear. What more likely than that Shakespeare, or Kyd, used a scene from a contemporary play upon this subject for his Play-scene, and in order to make the resemblance exact, altered the Hamlet-story to suit the story of Gonzago ?"

Lastly, the influence of Montaigne's Essays has been traced, in the cast of thought and reflection in parts of the play. Shakespeare might have been acquainted with Florid's translation of Montaigne. Goggin writes, "The assumption is not improbable but on the other hand there does not seem any good reason for depriving Shakespeare of the credit of having formed the ideas himself"

The original story of Hamlet as given by Saxo.

It will be interesting to compare Saxo's story with Shakespeare's Hamlet. What was originally a romantic legend with little of human interest has been transformed by Shakespeare into a tragedy of the human soul, groping its way through the impenetrable enigmas of life. A colourless story becomes in the hands of Shakespeare a story of the profoundest significance.

The outline of the story is given below.—

Horvendil and Fengo were two brothers, who ruled Jutland jointly under Rorik, King of Denmark. Horvendil kills Koll, King of Norway, in single combat, and is rewarded with the hand of Gerutha, daughter of Rorik, by whom he has a son Amleth. Fengo, excited by jealousy, treacherously murders Horvendil, secured the sole power and marries Gerutha. Amleth feigns madness so that he may escape the same fate as his father's and shows himself to be on the verge of imbecility while all the time he has been secretly plotting vengeance. Fengo becomes suspicious, and tries to find out whether he is really mad or not.

First an interview is arranged between Amleth and a beautiful girl, his foster sister, with whom he is in love, and it is hoped that the real state of his mind will be revealed in this scene. But being prewarned by a true friend, his foster-brother, Amleth keeps himself in hand, and escapes the trap.

Then one of the King's advisers suggests an interview between Amleth and Gerutha, and offers to overhear their

conversation. Amleth suspects something, and on entering the room, crows like a cock, and flaps his arms as if they were wings, and leaps about until he discovers the eaves-dropper, hidden in the straw on the floor. Amleth kills him, dismembers his body, boils it and casts it to the pigs. Then he returns to his mother, and takes her severely to task, and tells her plainly that his madness is assumed so that he may accomplish his revenge, and finally wins her over to his side.

Fengo now sends Amleth to England with two attendants, who carry letters asking the King of England to slay Amleth. Amleth alters the letters and substitutes the names of his companions, they are put to death. He then returns to Denmark after a year's absence, and arrives in time to assist as a butler at his own funeral feast, Amleth gets the courtiers drunk, sets fire to the palace, and kills his uncle with the sword. He justifies his action to the people in a long speech and is hailed as successor to Fengo

Dover Wilson writes, " . . . all the elements of *Hamlet* are here in germ, fratricide, incest, antic disposition, Ophelia, Horatio, Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the journey to England, its changeling letter and false seal, even the uncle's love of drink and the exchange of swords in the final scene. Most striking of all is Amleth's long speech to his mother in her bed room, which gives us the nucleus not only of Hamlet's dagger-words which 'clef' the heart of Gertrude but also of his first soliloquy. And though Amleth is a very different person, from Hamlet, we may find a hint of the latter's melancholy and inaction in his prototype's assumed lethargy "

### THE LOST HAMLET

Greene's *Menaphon*, which appeared in 1598, with a prefatory epistle by Thomas Nash, gives some reference to the lost *Hamlet* play. The following passage may throw some light on the point —

"It is a common practice now a daies amongst a sort of shifting companions, that runne through every arte and thrive by none to leave the trade of *Noverint* (i. e. attorney) whereto they were borne, and busie themselves with the indeavour of art, that could scarce lie latinize their necke verse if they should have neede, yet English Seneca read by candlelight yeeldes

manie good sentences, as *Bloud is a beggar*, and so forth ; and if you intreate him faire in a frostie morning, he will afford you whole *Hamlets* I should say handfulls of tragicall speeches. But O grief'. *Templus edax rerum* ; what is it that will last always ? The sea exaied by drops will in continuance be drie ; and Seneca, led bloud line by line, and page by page, at length must needs die to our stage which makes his famished followers to imitate the Kid in Aesop, who, enamoured with the Foxes new fangles, forsooke all hopes of life to leape into a new occupation, and these men, renouncing all possibilites of credite or estimation, to intermeddle with Italian translations : wherein how poorly they have plodded (as those that are neither provenzall men, are able to distinguish of (Articles), let all indifferent gentlemen that have travelled in that tongue discerne by their two-pennie Pamphlets."

In the above passage there is a fair indication of the character of the play. it was modelled on Seneca, and belonged to the school of the tragedy of blood, such as Marlow's *Tamburlaine*, Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. The diary of the actor, Philip Banlove, Manager of the Rose theatre at Newington Butts from 1592, has the following entry

"9 of June 1594 .. .. .

R (eeve)d at hamlet . . . . viijs "

The play was performed by the Lord Chamberlain's men, the company to which Shakespeare belonged. Lodge's *Wit's Miserie* (1596) refers to the play. "Hate Virtue is a foul hobber, and looks as pale as the wisard of the ghost, which cried so miserably at theatre, like an oyster-wife, *Hamlet revenge*."

The *Hamlet* play, lost later, seems to have caught on, as it will appear from many references to it in contemporary works. The following may be noted. Dekker's *Satiromastix* (1602)—"My Name's Hamlet revenge" *Westward Ho* (1607)—"Let these husbands play-mad *Hamlet* ; and cry revenge." Rowland' *The Night Raven* (1618)—" I will not cry *Hamlet Revenge*. "*The Looking Glass for London*, written by Lodge and Grieve, contains a burlesque reminiscence of the Hamlet : Adam, the smith's men, exclaims thus to the clown : "Alas, sir, your father,—why, sir, methinks I see the gentleman still ;



a proper youth he was, faith, aged some forty and ten, his heard rat's colour, half black, half white, his rose was in the highest degree of noses "

At first Shakespeare was supposed to be the author of this lost Hamlet, play, now it is attributed to Thomas Kyd, the author of the *Spanish Tragedy*. Nash's remarks seem to corroborate this view. Kyd's father is believed to have been a scurrilous, so Nash alludes to the trade of Noverint, "Nash speaks of trivial translators" and now Kyd had translated from both Italian and French. Then Nash charges that Seneca has been rifled, and Kyd had modelled himself upon Seneca.

Dover Wilson thus writes, "Further more, if Kyd the dramatist be Nash's mark, then the sly allusion to whole Hamlets, I should say, handfuls of tragicall speeches would lose half its point if Kyd were not known by the readers of *Menaphon* to have written a play of that name. It must be remembered too that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* belongs to the Senecan tradition and is demonstrably full of links with *The Spanish Tragedy*. I was for long extremely sceptical of the theory connecting Kyd with an early *Hamlet* but the arguments of Herr Osterberg leave little doubt in my mind that a Danish Tragedy on the Hamlet theme by Thomas Kyd was the talk of London in 1589".

#### Time of Action

Marshall (*Study of Hamlet*) proposes the following scheme of time.

Day 1	Act 1.	Scenes 1—3
Day 2.	Act 1.	Scenes 4 and 5 Interval about two months
Day 3	Act 11.	
Day 4.	Act 111	and Act 1v. Scenes 1—3
Day 5.	Act 1v.	Scene 4 Interval, about two months
Day 6.	Act 1v.	Scenes 5—7. Interval, two days.
Day 7.	Act v.	Scene 2

Daniel reduces the interval between Days 5 and 6 to about a week, he suggests no interval between Days 6 and 7, and gives one day only for the whole of Act V.

Dowden analyses the time of action thus. "The duration of the action in the play presents difficulties. It opens at midnight with the change of sentinels. Next day Haratio and Marcellus, with Bernards, inform Hamlet of the appearance of the ghost, it cannot be the forenoon, for Hamlet salutes Bernardo with "Good even sir." On the night of this day Hamlet watches and meets his father's ghost. The season of the year is perhaps March, the nights are bitter cold. The second act occupies part of one day. Polonius despatches Reynalds to Paris, Ophelia enters alarmed by Hamlet's visit, her father reads Hamlet's letter, the players arrive, and, when Hamlet parts from them, his words are, "I'll leave you till to-night." But before this day arrives, two months have elapsed since Hamlet was enjoined to revenge the murder—it was two months since his father's death when the play opened, and now it is "Twice Two Months." Next day Hamlet utters soliloquy "To be or not to be," encounters Ophelia as arranged by Polonius gives his advice to the players, is present at the performance of his play, and night having come, he pleads with his mother, and again sees his father's spirit. Here the third act closes, but the action proceeds without interruption, the King inquires for the body of Polonius, and tells Hamlet that the bark is ready to bear him to England. We must suppose that it is morning when Hamlet meets the troops, of Fortinbras. Two days previously the ambassadors from the Norway had returned, with a request that Claudius would permit Fortinbras to march through Denmark, against the Poles. Fortinbras himself must have arrived almost as soon as the ambassadors, and obtained the Danish King's permission. In IV V Ophelia appears distracted, and Laertes has returned from Paris to be revenged for Polonius' death. An interval of time must have passed since Hamlet sailed for England—an interval sufficient to permit Laertes to receive tidings of the death of Polonius and to reach Elsinore. In the next scene letters arrive, announcing that Hamlet is again in Denmark, before he was two days at sea, he became pirates' prisoner. On the day of the arrival of letters Ophelia is drowned. Her flowers indicate that the time is early June. Ophelia's burial and Hamlet's death take place on the next day. Yet the time has been sufficient for Fortinbras to win his Polish victory and be again in Elsinore,

and for ambassadors to return from England announcing the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. We might obligingly imagine that the pirate ship conveying Hamlet to Denmark was delayed by baffling winds, but his letters are written after he has landed, and they describe his companions as holding their course for England. The truth is, as stated by Professor Hall Graffin (whose record of the notes of time has aided me here) "Shakespeare is at fault," he "did not trouble himself to reconcile . . . inconsistencies which practical experience as an actor would tell him do not trouble the spectator,"

### STRUCTURE OF THE PLAY.

The opening scene of Shakespeare's plays is, as a rule, always significant. It is more than true of the opening of Hamlet. It is midnight when the play opens and the talk of the sentinels on the platforms evokes an atmosphere of mystery and terror. It is a tense moment when they are all expectant, the ghost may appear at any moment—and they have been talking about the ghost. The nipping cold, the midnight gloom and the death like silence have their effect on the sentinels and affect the readers. The opening scene is a masterpiece.

Then the ghost appears and Horatio who is a scholar addresses the ghost, but the ghost deigns no reply and moves away with majestic strides. The ghost resembles the late King Hamlet and sets them all speculating about the ghost's visitation. Horatio has explanation to suggest, but what is made clear is that something is wrong with the state of Denmark, there are rumours of war.

The second scene introduces Hamlet, and his appearance ought to be studied a remarkable figure in a black suit with downcast looks and aloofness from all that goes around him. He reacts violently to the King's hypocritical speech and smug complacency. Hamlet's dislike of Claudius is not concealed. Nor is his attitude towards his mother very amicable. We also see that there is a good understanding between the King and Polonius and Polonius is willing to be used as a tool by him. The sending of ambassadors to Norway is a side-issue, and explains the reason of the warlike preparation, referred to in the opening scene, and we partly understand now the background of the play.

We are more interested, however, in Hamlet's soliloquy following upon the break-up of the council. It appears that Hamlet has been brooding over his mother's hasty marriage. He looks upon it as incest and he cannot forgive his mother. It has been a devastating shock to him. Hamlet's reaction to his mother's incestuous marriage motivates the action of the play. The revenge motive is later added on. In the meantime Horatio tells Hamlet of the ghost's visit, and he learns that it is his father's ghost. It at once stirs his premonition:

My father's spirit in arms, all is not well;  
I doubt some foul play.

Hamlet is haunted by misgivings from the moment of his appearance in the play. And while he has been brooding over his mother's marriage he seems to be troubled in spirit by a vague apprehensive suspicion.

The third scene gives us a glimpse of domestic life at the house of Polonius. The position of Ophelia who is without a mother, and at whom both father and brother preach deserves our most sympathetic consideration. Ophelia seems to have received little attention. She could not have any personality of her own—the circumstances of her life forbid it, for she is to be used as a pawn by her father and the King, and so all that she helps to do is to complicate the action.

The fourth and fifth scenes are linked with the second scene. The ghost's revelations shake Hamlet to the core of his being, confirming his own suspicion and it is his mother's action which destroys his faith in women for ever. The revenge motive now begins to colour the action of the play.

It is to be remembered that it is a revenge play, and if critics have complained of delay in the execution of revenge they seem to ignore the convention of the revenge tragedy in which the revenge is postponed till end. Apart from it, there is an attempt by Shakespeare to rationalise. The delay is explained by Hamlet's weakness in resolution. But weakness in resolution is not everything. Hamlet has, it is true, a speculative interest in the things of life; hence he wants to make sure of his ground before proceeding to revenge. The thought of revenge is never absent from Hamlet's mind since his encounter with the ghost, then the Gonzago play settles the

question for him. Feigning of madness is one of the tricks of revenge play, and then the execution of revenge by a mad man implies some delay.

The effect of feigning madness by Hamlet is visible in his behaviour with Ophelia. This phase of complication engages the attention of Polonius and the King. Now it should be remembered that the feigning of madness is preliminary to revenge, Polonius is misled by it. He believes that love rejected for which he is responsible, has made Hamlet mad. He tries to persuade the king to believe it too. In the meantime the King having suspicions about Hamlet has summoned Rosencrantz and Guilderenbergh who were Hamlet's school fellows, and who might be useful in pumping out Hamlet. Polonius diverts the King's suspicions by suggesting that love is the root of Hamlet's trouble. And the King decides to wait and see instead of taking immediate steps to restrain him.

Players arrive to entertain Hamlet. The King and Hamlet work at cross purposes. The King wants to make use of the players for the diversion of Hamlet, while Hamlet wants to make use of them to get the King to betray his guilt. So the Gonzago play again holds up the execution of revenge, but at the same time it seems to be relevant to the important issue of the King's guilt, so it is again a part of the rationalising process. The point that we make is that Shakespeare, while following the convention of the revenge tragedy, which puts off the revenge till the end, rationalises the whole process so that the revenge may be adequately motivated to a highly susceptible and speculative person like Hamlet. It is known that Hamlet has doubts about the ghost, the ghost might be an evil spirit who assumed his father's shape to tempt him. It is in the play that he will be able to probe the King.

This brings us to the end of the second act. As we follow the turn of events, we do not seem to be aware of any delay involved. Hamlet's soliloquy ending the second act might convey the impression of delay and postponement to the critic. Here again it should be noted that self-reproaches which express themselves, so freely in such soliloquies are again a part of the revenge play and they should be taken at their face value. Now Hamlet's feigned

madness becomes a matter of great concern to the King and Queen.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern who have been spying on Hamlet, have not been able to discover the secret of his trouble. The King is now prepared to follow Polonius' advice, and so Ophelia is let loose on Hamlet, while the King and Polonius watch and overbear them unseen. Hamlet who suspects a trick, plays the part of a raving madman in the scene with Ophelia. Ophelia who is very much affected, sincerely believes that Hamlet is mad beyond recovery. The King gives little credit to Polonius' diagnosis, and realises the danger that Hamlet's presence in Denmark means to him and to his throne. He makes up his mind to send Hamlet to England.

In the next scene the players are getting busy and Hamlet instructs them in the matter of acting, for he is going to get them to play something that squares with his end in view. He has inserted a few lines, especially composed, into the Gonzago play, and it is his concern that these lines should be properly delivered. Hence the justification for his elaborate instructions to the actors. The play-scene marks the climax. When the murder scene is enacted, the King leaves at once, and it is abandoned. But it has served its purpose all right for Hamlet. The King is mightily displeased and the queen sends for Hamlet. This interview is arranged on the advice of Polonius, for Polonius still believes that Hamlet's madness springs from love. As Hamlet goes to see his mother he comes upon the King praying and he might have at once dispatched him, as he intended and it is urged by critics that he should have done so when he had solemnly resolved in his soliloquy at the end of second scene.

It is now the very witching time of night,  
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out  
Contagion to the world, now could I drink hot blood,  
And do such bitter business as the day  
Would quake to lock on

Hamlet might have killed Claudius and the drama would have ended with the execution of the revenge, in fact what to do with Hamlet after he has executed his revenge, would have been a problem. - In any case the motive given by

Hamlet for not killing Claudius at the moment, should be enough. His revenge could not have been accomplished by killing Candius when he was praying.

In the next scene his interview with his mother takes place. Hamlet tells his mother everything plainly and makes it clear to her that he is not mad, and speaks daggers to her, ruthlessly dissecting her soul. Hearing a noise he stabs Polonius behind the tapestry. He thinks that it is the King, and discovering his mistake he cries out

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell;  
I took thee for thy better.

Now he is wrought up to mood of revenge and there can be no question of his being averse to revenge or postponing it unnecessarily. The ghost appears again to admonish him. The ghost's words may again be interpreted as a reproach for Hamlet's delay in executing revenge.

Do not forget this visitation  
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.

It is quite natural for the ghost to be impatient that the murder has not yet been avenged. The impression of delay is an illusion that seems to have been largely created by Hamlet's soliloquies. The witnessing of the play on the stage does not on the other hand, suggest any delay in the execution of revenge.

The killing of Polonius quickens the movement of the play. Events are now crowded on. Hamlet is shipped off to England. He manages to change the commission, purporting that he is to be put to death on his arrival in England—he substitutes the names of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for his own. He encounters pirates, and happens to board their ship, and ransom himself off on the coast of Denmark. So Hamlet is back again in Elsinore.

The King hushes up the circumstances of Polonius' death. Further complications now arise. Ophelia goes mad between her grief for her father and star crossed love. The tidings of Polonius's death bring Laertes back from Paris. He rouses the people against Claudius, and at their head, rushes the King's presence. The situation is further aggravated by Ophelia's drowning. Claudius is clever enough to manage

Laertes. He makes a pact with Laertes with the purpose of encompassing Hamlet's death, and the opportunity for carrying out the plan is provided by Hamlet's return.

Since the killing of Polonius the action of the play speeds up and becomes crowded. The killing of Polonius takes place in the last scene of the third act. And the fourth act is packed full with events of a varied and complicated character—and everything seems to be heading for crash. The cumulative effect of the events of the fourth act, as noted above, manifests itself in the fifth act.

The plot of doing away with Hamlet with poison (which originates in the brain of Claudius) either in the shape of a rapier thrust or a drink has already been formed between Claudius and Laertes. Then the fifth act opens in a churchyard, and later shifts to a hall in the castle. There is an atmosphere of gloom and foreboding, further intensified by Hamlet's speculation of a morbid interest on a skull that he picks up. Then appears the procession bearing the corpse of Ophelia, Laertes being one of the mourners, the King and Queen following. Now a strange situation develops: Laertes in his grief leaps into the grave when the dead body of Ophelia has been deposited in it and begs all to heap the clods of earth on the quick and dead. Hamlet now advances and flings himself into the grave, and the two grapple with each other until they are parted by the attendants. It is a melodramatic situation. Hamlet blusters, true to his role of a mad man.

In the last scene Hamlet and Horatio are together again. In his growing isolation he clings more and more to Horatio, and it is to him that he confides the secret trouble of his mind. A cloud hangs upon his spirit:

'But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart, but it is no matter.'

He is invited to take part in fencing with Laertes by the King. Horatio, noticing his mental depression, would rather dissuade him from it, but Hamlet speaks like a fatalist and is prepared to take whatever may come. The plot of killing Hamlet (which has been formed by the King and Laertes) centres round the innocent looking fencing bout in which Laertes will choose a rapier with a poisoned point. Laertes



wound's Hamlet with it infencing, and then Hamlet in his rage snatches Laerte's poisoned rapier and wounds him in turn. In the meantime the queen drinks the poisoned cup that the king has intended for Hamlet to drink as a second alternative. The queen cries out that she is poisoned and next Laertes confesses the whole crime. Now Hamlet stabs the king with the poisoned rapier. Laertes before dying asks Hamlet's forgiveness, and both are reconciled before their death. So finally Hamlet's revenge is accomplished but it proves to be a costly revenge involving so many deaths—the death of the innocent Ophelia.

The main action of the play as it is seen from the analysis above is crowded into the last three acts. Hamlet's personal initiative is not lacking in this matter—in fact he begins to act when he is aboard the ship, on his way to England. Then, of course he is caught in a whirlpool of incidents which seem to arise out of his killing of Polonius—the madness of Ophelia, the return of Laertes from Paris, the plot of the King and Laertes to kill Hamlet, which combine to lead to the catastrophe.

### HOW THE PLAY SHOULD BE STUDIED

Whether *Hamlet* should be regarded as the greatest of Shakespeare's tragedies is a matter of opinion. But there has been a lot of speculation about it, critics and commentators have been moved by its profoundest mystery and significance. Whatever meaning of *Hamlet* is discovered or propounded depends on the individual perception, insight and sympathy of a critic. The interpretation of the play must vary according to each critic's taste and experience. Now the question is whether an objective approach to the play, not necessarily subservient to the tradition views is possible at all. Such attempt has been made by the American critic, E. E. Sall.

The views of Goethe and Coleridge have influenced mostly later critics. Goethe writes, "Shakespeare sought to depict a great deed laid upon a soul unequal to the performance of it. In this view I find the piece composed throughout. Here is an oak tree planted in a costly vase, which should receive into its bosom only lovely flowers, the roots spread out, the vase is shattered to pieces." Later critics have

echoed this view or but a variation of it. The main charge against Hamlet is weak resolution, incapacity of action, predominance of the intellectual and analytical over the volitional faculties. Attention is mostly and exclusively concentrated on the character, of Hamlet. It is true that Hamlet is the most engaging character, and gives all its significance to the play. Yet the type of the play ought to be considered too, and when it is done, much of the mystery or mystification that is made of the character of Hamlet dissolves. Critics have done great discredit to the character of Hamlet by investing it with the profoundest significance. It need not be denied that Hamlet may bear all the mountain-load of speculative interpretation on his back. But what is necessary is that we should have a clear perspective of the character.

We need to bear in mind the type of the play that Hamlet is, its antecedents, the Elizabethan audience none too intellectual and therefore least likely to discover a profound mystery in *Hamlet*. It should be remembered that madness was a comic subject on the Elizabethan stage, and that the Elizabethan must have immensely enjoyed Hamlet's quibbles and pungent jests, his ranting in Ophelia's grave and the triple murders in the last scene of the play. It is after all a Revenge play that Shakespeare proposed to write. It will not do to forget this. He had before him Kyd's example and Kyd followed the Senecan Technique and convention, as exemplified in *The Spanish Tragedy*, since his *Hamlet* is lost. Ghost (the spirit of revenge), ranting melodrama, sententious maxims, fatalism and cynicism are all found. Shakespeare has his own way of doing things, and is little fettered by convention and tradition. His *Hamlet* grows out of a Senecan Revenge-play and carries traces of it, and yet it is something distinct from the Senecan type of tragedy. It is distinct because it is so rich in poetry and thought—full of the weightiest reflections on life and deepest speculations on human conduct and destiny. Shakespeare seems to have used Hamlet as a peg on which to hang his deepest utterances on life, but it does not any way alter the character of the play. It is a revenge play, and in revenge play the revenge which summons a spirit from the under-world, is executed only towards the end. To say that Hamlet is weak in resolution, or is dominated by a speculative interest in life and, therefore, incapable of action

is irrelevant to the drift of the play. There may be depths in *Hamlet* that remain unplumbed, but if the play is to be studied in reference to the literary fashion of the day (when the Senecan revenge-play was so popular) and to the Elizabethan audience—a factor which cannot be ignored, then it will be better to seek no deeper meaning in it, but be satisfied with what lies on the surface of the play. It has not, to speak the truth, escaped altogether the crudities of its original ranting, melodrama violence, etc, but to make up for them there are all the wealth of imagery and thought, all the resources of poetry, all the profundity of wisdom, all the values of shifting experience.

In favour of an objective and realistic study of *Hamlet* we quote below the remarks of E. E. Stall. "Because not only of the popular demand but of dramatic requirements, the ghost must still appear at the beginning and the tragic deed be accomplished, as in all good revenge plays, ancient or modern, at the end. How, then, was the revenge to be occupied in the meantime? As in the old *Hamlet* of course—secretly, with intrigue and melancholy meditation, which to us seem not greatly to advance the business in hand (but must needs not too greatly advance it), and publicly, with a pretence of madness, which to us seems only to thwart it. But there these matters were, superficially at least, less unpalatable. There the delay, though like Hieronimo, in *The Spanish Tragedy*, the hero reproached himself for it, was attributed to the king's being difficult of access, and the feigned madness was represented as a means to reach him. These motives, like others the dramatist found in his sources, he deliberately omitted (for a poor explanation only creates a need of explanation), and, as in *Othello* and *Macbeth*, he had recourse to manoeuvring. In a play that bore such a title and kept to the old story, he could not without the plainest indication, which he has not provided, shake off the Senecan tradition and, prompted by his usual opportunism, he turned that tradition to account. Profiting by the familiarity of feigned madness as an artifice and natural employment of the revenger at court, not only in old *Hamlet* *The Spanish Tragedy* and his own *Titus Andronicus*, but also in the legends of the elder Brutus at the court of Tarquin, and of David at that of Achish, King of Gath—"And he changed his behaviour before

them, and feigned mad in their hands"—he passed lightly, carrying his audience with him, over the reasons of it here :

As I perchance hereafter shall think meet

To put an antic disposition on,—

only by the time they are to see him again, the hero has put it on already. The dramatist taking it as a matter of course, the audience would so take it, and not, like the critics, scratch their heads, and cunningly conclude (as a generation ago) that it is a "safety-valve" or (as nowadays) a case of "double consciousness" or any of the numerous other things it has been thought to be, and still less, that the man is crazy in reality. Thus, and by his subtler treatment and phrasing, he intensified an effect of contrast provided in the melo-drama, similar ..... to that later invented for Othello, and, however, improbable, too precious to be surrendered, And profiting by the familiarity of the rest of the intrigue, the baffling of the spies, the doubt of the ghost and the theatrical performance to satisfy it, the spearing of the King at his devotions, the killing of him (as is intended) behind the arras and the reproachful conference with his mother, the trip to England—the dramatist (to judge by the changes from Quarto 1 to Quarto II and the Folio) subdued, instead of emphasizing, its irrelevance, but accentuated and completed its dangers, letting Hamlet previously play the King's game (but beat him at it) as it were his own, and, unlike Kyd's Hamlet, keep the secret of his revengeful purpose for his friends, his mother, and even from Horatio until near the end of tragedy, and his plan to the very end. Thus he heightened the suspense and mystery, imparted to the hero dignity, delicacy and pathos and threw the whole burden of motivation, or explanation, upon his self-reproaches".

The point is that Shakespeare does not make a psychological problem of Hamlet. Sale's interpretation seems to be quite sensible and rational. The difference between Kyd and Shakespeare is this. while the stage convention lies bare to the bones in its nakedness in Kyd's plays, it is draped by Shakespeare in graceful and exquisite poetry—and is wrought into a miracle by his insight into the workings of the human mind and his rich gift of characterization.

## SOLILOQUIES IN HAMLET

Soliloquies seem to have legitimate place in Shakespeare's tragedies. They may help to interpret some knotty or obscure points in the action of the play or throw light on the motive or action of a character. They have a vital relation to the progress and movement of the play. Hamlet's soliloquies do help to set his character in the true perspective. His first soliloquy beginning—"How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of the world"—clearly sets forth his reaction to his mother's hasty marriage. The reaction goes too far, destroying his faith in womankind and setting him brooding on the waywardness of human will and passion and perversity of the sex impulse. Perhaps his extraordinary devotion to his father tends to exaggerate his mother's vice. The first soliloquy reveals the composition of his character—delicate sensibility and refinement of feeling, high idealism, lonely brooding, analytical and speculative mind. The soliloquy brings home to us his disgust at his mother's conduct, it is incest to him, and this disgust colours all his subsequent life, and accounts for much of his cynicism, particularly in his views about woman. The first soliloquy explains much in Hamlet's character and susceptible temperament.

In his remaining soliloquies there is but one recurring thought, it is self reproach at the delay in the execution of his revenge. His soliloquy—"To be, or not to be"—strikes a different note, for in it he ponders on the abstract notion of suicide and the hereafter. The thought of suicide he does not certainly consider altogether dispassionately, it might have arisen in his mind, as we may see in his first soliloquy, as counter-action to his feeling of disgust. Later he does not seem to have entertained it in his mind, for there is no hint of it in his subsequent soliloquies. The brief soliloquy in the fifth scene of the first act, following upon the ghosts revelations, marks a great revulsion of feeling in him, too deep for words. It leaves him in a state of mental collapse. He has got to pull himself together, for he has the great task of his life to perform, urged as he is by supernatural soliciting. In the soliloquy that comes at the end of the second act, if there is self reproach, he is determined to seek more positive ground for action and makes up his mind.

I'll have grounds.  
 More relative than this, the play's the thing  
 Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King

So he plans to have a play staged in the presence of the King, re-enacting the circumstances of his father's murder. This soliloquy then has an important bearing upon the action of the play.

G. B. Harrison has a long note on the soliloquies in *Hamlet*, and it is quoted below: "Self-revelation in the conditions and conventions of the little Elizabethan theatre would best be accomplished by soliloquy. He had used soliloquies often enough but hitherto they were direct, intended to convey to the audience a piece of information, either that the speaker was playing a deceitful part, or to let them know what was happening or about to happen or else set pieces of declamation. Thus Prince Hal explained that he was far less in Falstaff's pocket than the fat Knight supposed, or Benedick chattered about love and bachelors, or, earlier, Richard Crookback came forward to declare bluntly that he was determined to be a villain. In *Hamlet* for the first time Shakespeare elaborated a soliloquy to show a character exploring his own complex mentality. Such self-analysis was not entirely new in English literature. In the novels of the Euphists the artificial ladies and gentlemen would meander off into soliloquy on love and duty for pages on end, but rather for the sake of pretty parallels of image and sentence thus produced than for any deeper psychological cause. Montaigne had analysed his own emotions. More recently in English, Sir William Cornwallis in his two remarkable *Essays* sought to describe his own moods hour by hour.

In the first soliloquy Shakespeare revealed Hamlet's mind brooding disgustedly over the shock of his mother's remarriage. She and his father had doted upon each other almost indecently, and now she was committing incest, post-haste, with a man who had no physical attraction. In this state Horatio and Marcellus and Bernardo come upon him with the strange tale of the apparition and he is eager to watch with them. Here at least is something to be done, a relief for one night from Claudius's interminable carousing

..Hamlet's next soliloquy was delivered after the arrival of the players and the recitation of the Heculeia speech. The player's passionate enunciation has profoundly stirred him, reminding him that he has done nothing, and can do nothing but curse. But the incident puts an idea into his head. He will cause the players to play something like murder and then he will know for certain, for the Ghost might have been a devil or an illusion, such illusions were a common symptom in the advanced stages of melancholy and those who wrote treatises on the subject gave strange examples of hallucination. Shakespeare used this soliloquy with triple intention it showed the intensity of Hamlet's mood of disgust, explained his delay and revealed his mind working towards the next stage in the drama.

Again after the play-scene, Shakespeare revealed the movement of Hamlet's mind. As Hamlet, now keyed up for vengeance, passes on his way to see his mother, he comes upon Claudius at prayer. He draws his sword and approaches stealthily

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying,  
And now I'll do it, and so he goes to heaven ;  
And so am I revenged That would be scann'd,  
A villain kills my father ; and for that  
I, his sole son, do this same villain send  
To heaven.

But as he raises his arm for the stroke, there comes back to him the murder which is to be revenged, the other murder in the garden and the ghost's most bitter complaint.

Thus was I, sleeping, by brother's hand  
Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch'd .  
Cut off even in the blossom of my sin,  
Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd,  
No reckoning made, but sent to my account  
With all my imperfections on my head.

These were words which throbbed in Hamlet's mind in the unspoken beats of the unfinished blank verse line. He lowers his sword and continues

Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge  
He took my father grossly, full of bread ,  
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May ;

And how his audit stands who knows save heaven ?  
 But, in our circumstance and course of thought,  
 'Tis heavy with him, and am I then reveng'd,  
 To take him in the purging of his soul,  
 When he is fit and seasoned for his passage ?

There was no hell fire here. Hamlet must wait to attack his uncle .

At gaming, swearing, or about some act  
 That has no relish of salvation in't,  
 Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,  
 And that his soul may be as damned and black  
 As hell whereto he goes

Upto this point the play followed the pattern of revenge drama. The first part showed how the duty of vengeance was laid upon Prince Hamlet, the second how Prince Hamlet proved his uncle guilty, and a third should follow to show how Hamlet took vengeance. Shakespeare now set his plot in a new direction and began .. . a second revenge play."

#### DOES HAMLET GIVE US MORE OF SHAKESPEARE THAN ANY OTHER PLAY ?

Morton Luce writes, "Love, joy, sorrow, death, hope, these are the things belonging to the tragedy or rather to the tragic-comedy of life ; all are in this play , and they are here idealised into a new, beautiful, eternal Being. "

And if in the play so are they also embodied in the person of Hamlet ; no wonder that the dramatist often forgot the theatre as he worked the character and that character was never finished, while the play became inordinately reflective and inordinately long. But here I may quote from my *Hand book to Tennyson* (p. 301) : "Hamlet is a consistent character. To begin with, he is more thoughtful and less obviously mad in the later play ; and in this, as the drama proceeds, he grows in years, indisposition, in doubtfulness between sanity and insanity," I know my words are wild—so he, too, might, say ; for with words he 'unpacks his heart ; his words, and not his actions, are governed most by Shakespeare's soul. How long and how numerous are his soliloquies ; what a personal interest he takes in the stage ; what faith he has lost in women , how he ponders over the problems of evil and good,



and life and death. How sad he is, and with what mysterious sadness "Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart." As the dramatist worked at his character, he drew nearer to him and nearer, gave him more of his own eight-and-thirty years, a maturer mind, a deeper reflectiveness; he is sad most of all with Shakespeare's sadness, and lest he shall reflect the artist too closely, Shakespeare drives him to and fro on the verge of madness."

Morton Luce seems to identify Shakespeare almost with Hamlet; and lest it should be too obvious, Morton Luce reasons that Shakespeare makes him appear mad. Similarly in *the Tempest* Shakespeare is identified with Prospero, and when Prospero abjures magic and buries his magic wand in the earth, it is taken as Shakespeare's farewell to the stage. In *Hamlet* all utterances, however cynical they are, and all profound reflections, though casual, which are appropriate to Hamlet in a certain context, are interpreted as Shakespeare's personal views.

Shakespeare knows well what the business of a dramatist is—namely, self-effacement. The dramatist must keep himself in the background, and let his characters speak on their own, according as the circumstances are, in which they are placed. Shakespeare could not have made then Hamlet the mouthpiece of his own views and sentiments. Secondly, it will not do to forget that *Hamlet* is a revenge-play, fettered by certain conventions. If *Hamlet* is much superior to Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* by virtue of its poetry, human psychology and imaginative splendour, it belongs to the same category, and the cruder elements of the revenge-play have not been totally refined away from *Hamlet*, for example, declamation, sententious maxims (as in Polonius) and melodrama are present in varying proportions in *Hamlet*. All the interest attaches to the character of Hamlet. A super-fine and sensitive soul, he is called to the task of revenge, which cannot be accomplished without murder, from which he naturally shrinks. Rotten as the court of the king is he has a loathing of vices and corruption rampant in society; the action of his mother whom he loved and adored next to his father, shakes his faith in woman, the soul murder of his father sets him brooding on the changes of mortality. There are certainly finer elements in *Hamlet*, but it will be wide of the mark to

say that he possesses the soul of Shakespeare. With his fit, of passion, with his irritability, with his rash, impulsive actions, he is a dark, menacing figure, and so he is fit to be the hero of a revenge play.

Those who adopt the idealistic and subjective interpretation of the play assert or believe that we come nearest to the heart and soul of Shakespeare in *Hamlet*. We may well doubt whether Shakespeare ever 'unlocked' his heart, though Wordsworth believes that he did in his sonnets; lately, however, a subjective interpretation of Shakespeare's sonnets has been favoured by most critics. Even if we find Shakespeare revealing his personal history in the sonnets, the same cannot be true of his dramas which are objective in character. Shakespeare says in *Hamlet* that the business of the drama is to hold the mirror up to nature and we have, therefore, no reason to hunt for Shakespeare's inmost thoughts in *Hamlet*.

However, *Hamlet* may abound in the profoundest utterances on life and its mysterious ways, we look in vain for any balanced views. The casualty and dramatic appropriateness of such profound utterances are the most noteworthy point. According to the subjective interpretation of the play, Shakespeare has put more of himself in *Hamlet* than in any other play. It is believed that the play reflects Shakespeare's own disgust of life, cynicism and despondency, which, are traced by critics to Essex's rebellion and execution. Essex's death is supposed to have cast gloom on Shakespeare's mind. If this were true, it may be assured that Shakespeare worked off the gloom of his mind in impersonal dramatic utterances in *Hamlet*.

### INCONSISTENCIES IN HAMLET

On a careful analysis of the plot and action of the play many inconsistencies will be discovered. These inconsistencies escape our notice when we see the play on the stage, or read it in our study. We are more captivated by the poetry and passion and imagination of the play, and even by the vivid expression of certain phases of thought which appeal to some readers more than to others.

The opening scene in which the ghost makes his appearance to the sentinels on duty, and stalks away speechless, has something incredible or absurd about it, but it is overcome

by the poetry and imagination with which it is invested. How is it that the king who seems to be so acute in the affairs of life, fails to see that Hamlet's madness is feigned? Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are equally taken in. Again Horatio is a great friend and companion of Hamlet, yet the king and Horatio are never brought together in the deliberations of the king over Hamlet's madness. Again the king watches the dumb show in the play-scene, in which are reenacted all the details of the murder of Hamlet's father, and he remains unperturbed. In the queen's private chamber while Hamlet talks to the ghost or the ghost appears and talks to Hamlet, the queen neither sees nor hears the ghost. Ophelia is mad, and she is allowed to go about by herself, and gets drowned because she is unattended. In the fencing match blunted foils are to be used, Hamlet inquires whether they are of the same length, but he fails to notice "unbated" sword that Laertes chooses. These are some of the inconsistencies which will appear to a y body who carefully goes into the plot of the play.

John Bailey writes, 'Yet this all-compelling story has many defects or inconsistencies apart from the uncertainty about the character of its actor. Take, for instance, the character of Fortinbras. The play ends as do Shakespeare's tragedies end on the note of peace and with a leaving of the disordered world in the hands of plain and simple men who have played no great part in the story. This was partly, not doubt, for technical reasons, there was no curtain then, and dead bodies had to be got off somehow and by somebody. But it is more than that. There is always at the end as Mr Barker has said, "a turning to the living future, and I should add, more still, a desire for peace and calm and hope at the last. So Octavius speaks the last words of *Julius Caesar*, Malcolm of *Macbeth*, Albany of *Lear*. And here after everybody else is dead, the kingdom and its future are left to Fortinbras. But if we look back at the first scene of the first act, we shall find it very surprising that the "young Fortinbras" there described should be contentedly accepted as ruler of Denmark.

Then how strange it is that the Ghost comes from Purgatory to talk to Hamlet, and yet when Hamlet speaks of what happen, after death he seems to have no thought of Purga-

tory at all! How strange that, where all the action takes place in Denmark and all the characters are Danes, they should continually speak of Denmark as if they were outside it, and use the word Dane apparently as a term of reproach, as when the Queen says, "O, this is counter you false Danish dogs!" and when Hamlet at the end addresses the king as thou incestuous murderous damned Dane!" How strange that Hamlet in the first act should hardly know by sight his apparently old and intimate friend, Horatio; that he is "at school" in Act I and aged thirty in Act V; that in the grove scene Horatio should apparently know little of Laertes, the brother of Ophelia and the son of the Court Chamberlain! There are instances everywhere of Shakespeare's entire indifference to consistency, but none anywhere odder than these, which are only specimens of many to be found in *Hamlet*. It is also curious, though not an inconsistency, that he should have put the great saying—perhaps his greatest—about kingship "There's such divinity doth hedge a king," into the mouth of Claudius, almost the worst of all his bad kings.

Yet these technical faults . are little noticed either in the theatre or the closet, and they hardly detract at all from our delight and wonder at the poetry, greatness and truth of this extraordinary drama. In it, as in all the greatest creations of art, it is hard to say whether it is its naturalness or its poetry, its rendering of truth as all see it, or its revealing of things in that truth which few see, its immanence, we may say or its transcendence, which is its supreme quality. In fact, the two are inextricably mixed. We are at home in it; we are in the world we live in every day." But we are also all the while in a world, strangely greater, strangely more wonderful and more beautiful, than that of our experience."

#### HAMLET AS THE TRAGEDY OF A HUMAN SOUL

Goggin writes, "Hamlet is not to be regarded as a tragedy of revenge, but as the tragedy of a human soul." Goggin seemed to discover much of profound mystery in *Hamlet*. *Hamlet* may have other elements than those which strictly belong to a revenge. But to say that it is not a 'tragedy of revenge' is to deny its essential drift and character. The motive of the play from beginning to end is revenge. The ghost appears at the very opening of the play—and it is a

spirit of revenge, and will communicate its purpose to none but Hamlet, and since the revelations of the ghost Hamlet has no other thought in his mind than how to execute the revenge, no matter how it is delayed by circumstances.

Goggin writes, "From the point of view of conception Hamlet differs from Shakespeare's other tragedies in that the whole interest of the play centres round one personage. In fact, the character of Hamlet is itself the drama of Hamlet. The other characters are but of subordinate importance serving only to bring out the character of the hero or to supply motives for his actions or thoughts. Hence Hamlet is not to be regarded as a tragedy of revenge, but as the tragedy of a human soul, of which the highest and noblest qualities become, under influence of the evil and wickedness of this world, the causes of its failure and ruin.

In a wider sense Hamlet is the tragedy of humanity, and Hamlet is himself typical of humanity with its burdens heavy to bear. Hence comes the widespread popularity of the drama. Generations of readers and spectators have found themselves mirrored in Hamlet. The good and thoughtful of all ages find themselves reflected in him—all those who seeing the evil and rottenness of the world, find themselves powerless to reform it." Morton Luce expresses the same view. "the hero stands alone, in other tragedies other heroic figures occupy the stage here the leading character is the drama, and that drama is the tragedy not of ambition, nor jealousy, nor ingratitude; it is the most inevitable and the most awful of tragedies, the tragedy of human life, we might almost say that Hamlet stands for Humanity, with its burden greater than it can bear, we are not all Macbeths, nor Lears, nor O.hellös, but we are all Hamlets, even as was Shakespeare.

If is the tragedy of life, and of all that life can give or take away,—love, joy, sorrow, death, hope, of love with its mighty instincts, sexual or social, the honey of mutual vows, filial affection, motherhood, wifehood, friendship of joy in this goodly frame the earth and in man the beauty of the world; of the world of sorrow over such a quintessence of dust, of death, the beginning of new life, the passing through nature to eternity, of hope, for there is a special providence in the

fall of a sparrow, and there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of even in the philosophy of Shakespeare".

It is easy to philosophize. It is true that all the interest of the drama centres on Hamlet, and it is as it should be and that does not make any singular difference between *Hamlet* and other tragedies of Shakespeare. The only difference may perhaps be that the character and personality of Hamlet have given rise to a variety of speculation, it being interpreted by every individual to please his taste. It may be the fact that we are more attracted by Hamlet than any other Shakespearian tragic hero. Then again to say that *Hamlet* is the tragedy of a human soul seems to be a commonplace, for every tragedy is, in a sense, the history of the human soul. No special characteristic of *Hamlet* seems to be conveyed to us in that remark. Nor does Hamlet stand for Humanity, nor can every reader look upon himself in Hamlet. Hamlet has a distinct individuality of his own—his own idiosyncrasy. Very few people have Hamlet's delicacy and refinement of feeling, his speculative interest in the things of life, his elaborate analytical reasoning. Nor is it "the tragedy of life, and of all that life can give or take away". It has a much narrower scope indeed, it portrays but the struggle of an individual, gifted with a finer sense of things and an *introvert* at that, to accomplish the task of revenge involving bloodshed from which he instinctively shrinks, but which he never abandons for a moment.

If Shakespeare has sounded greater depths in *Hamlet*, it will not do to forget the purpose of his writing the play. That purpose is revenge—revenge for that foul murder of the father to be executed by a son who idolized the father. He might well cry.

The time is out of joint, O cursed spite  
That ever I was born to set it right!

The rottenness of things in Denmark afflicts his soul, And if he wished strongly for a change or a reconstruction of society, he was not going to play the part of a reformer—rather he believes that the accomplishment of his revenge which would mean the expulsion of the old regime would set things right.

If Hamlet is the tragedy of a human soul, it means a conflict in the soul of Hamlet, which goes on deepening in the flux of circumstances and torturing him with the insolubility of the issue he is engaged in, viz. cleaning out the old regime while his immediate task is revenge. And he has had to fight against impossible odds, for the king's position seems impregnable, his mother being allied with him, and the king's agents working against him. His loneliness must have emphasized the conflict in him, and far from being a dreamer, he keeps his eyes open and notices every phase of life which provokes his bitter, satirical comments. He speaks as a satirist, disillusioned and cynical. His struggle with difficulties, material and spiritual brings him new and varied experience, which are expressed in satirical comments.

This "overthrow" of a "noble mind" (though not by madness as Ophelia thought) is the tragedy of Hamlet (Herford)

Herford thus analyses the character of Hamlet—"Hamlet, like Brutus, is an idealist, keenly conscious of the dissonance between what should be and what is. But what is wrong with the world, in his eyes, is no form of government, actual or impending. He sees evil rampant or insidious everywhere, the world is an unweeded garden that runs to seed, possessed by things rank and gross in nature merely. Far from imagining like Brutus, that he can save the situation by a stroke of the sword, he is a victim of a despondency which paralyzes his will, and were it not for his honest friend Horatio and the memory of his father, it would have sapped his faith in the very possibility of goodness. This despondency was not inborn in Hamlet, and we have glimpses of lyric joy in the glory of the Earth and of Man (II ii). But the disposition to it was inborn, and when his beloved father suddenly and mysteriously dies, and his mother becomes incestuous wife of his uncle, the glory is quenched for him, man becomes "a quittance of dust", and all things in life seem stale, flat and unprofitable. Then comes the appalling communication of the Ghost. For a moment it seems as if the passion of grief and horror, into which it hits him would reanimate his palsied nerve, and he would "sweep to his revenge." But it is only for a moment. The paralysis sinks again upon his will, while the high-strung brain pours itself forth in a feverish energy of thought, inventing brilliant

schemes to be carried out to-morrow (II ii) and pregnant reasons for not acting now (III iii), but never save in brief flashes (II ii) escaping the agonising sense of foulity which in two great soliloquies (I. ii and IV iv.) breaks forth in a speech of incomparable poignancy. This 'overthrow' of a "noble mind" (though not by madness, as Ophelia thought) is the tragedy of Hamlet".

The overthrow of a noble mind cannot be the last word in a tragedy. It is true that Hamlet is embittered and rendered cynical by his unique experiences—first, the incestuous marriage of his mother with his uncle, secondly, the disclosure of the foul murder of his father. Each is a shock that might have easily prostrated or maddened any mind. It may be admitted that Hamlet, though kept reeling for the moment by what he is told by the ghost, bears up under it. And if for his own purposes and for his safety, he assumes madness, he acts cautiously and even discreetly, and can see through Rosencranz and Guildenstern, and is alive to the game the king and Polonius are playing. He keeps his wits about him, there is no evidence of overthrow of a mind. But it may mean that a fine and sensitive mind is sored and embittered and driven to the verge of madness by what it experiences of the evil and grossness of life. But the tragedy will have little meaning if the partial darkening of Hamlet's mind does not finally give way to the new light breaking in upon it after he has accomplished his revenge, and dies with the last words in his mouth—"the rest is silence"—a death that leaves the profoundest impression on our minds.

Horatio in Hamlet's position would have done the deed at once, and seven lives would have been saved (*Verity*)

Verity apparently makes this distinction between Hamlet and Horatio—Hamlet a man of thought and speculation and Horatio a man of action. Horatio being a man of action would have bothered little about finer issues, and swept straight to his revenge. Granted that Horatio is a man of action, it does not necessarily follow that he would have been able to execute his revenge at once and without involving any unnecessary loss of lives. Verity evidently implies that Hamlet bungles the whole business of revenge. Thought may predominate over action in Hamlet, but he is also cap-



able of energetic, stern action, as witnessed by his killing of Polonius whom he mistook for the king.

Verity ignores the difficulties, both material and spiritual, with which Hamlet has to contend. First, the king is cautious, and is rarely alone, and has his body guard to look to his safety. Even if Hamlet had resolved on immediate revenge, he could not have a chance. Secondly Hamlet has a natural shrinking from bloodshed, which is due to his refinement of feeling—and has a rather deplorable habit of balancing too nicely the consequences of an action. These may be described as spiritual difficulties and they may well appear to be more formidable than material difficulties. All these issues should have been taken into consideration by Verity.

Then supposing that no such spiritual difficulties had existed for Horatio, since Horatio is believed to be a man of action little troubled by scruples like Hamlet's, the task of revenge would have been no easy one for him for the king is a crafty fellow, and is well-guarded. When Hamlet says that Horatio is not a "passion's slave," it means that he has a more balanced will and character than Hamlet does possess. Horatio seems to come nearer to the Stoic ideal.

As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,  
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards  
Hath ta'en with equal thanks.

It is in this sense that Horatio is not a "passion's slave", but it does not follow that he has not the same delicacy of feeling and sentiment as Hamlet, or that he might not have been troubled by like scruples.

There are other factors too. Accident plays an important part in life, and Shakespeare therefore, gives it due place in his tragedies. To take a very clear example, accident has a large part to play in bringing about the tragic incident in *Othello*, or if it be said that accident has as much to do with it as Iago's machinations, accident favours Iago too. If so many lives are lost in *Hamlet*, Hamlet alone is not to blame. His action is shaped by forces over which he has no control. Accident is such a force. We may put it as "a greater power than we can contradict." This power, not ourselves, which, as Shakespeare says, sometimes thwarts our intents

may also fulfil them in a way unexpected by us. If due recognition is given to these factors, we can understand why Hamlet's revenge takes or seems to take so long to accomplish, and involves so many lives.

Then there is a difference in the deaths that have occurred. There seems to be a poetic justice in the death of Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Accident has something to do with the death of Polonius. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern who have been acting as the king's agents are deliberately sent to death by Hamlet.

There's letters seal'd ; and my two schoolfellows  
Whom I'll trust as I'll adders fang'd,  
They bear the mandate ; they must sweep my way,  
And marshal me to knavery. Let it work ;  
For 'tis the sport to have the engineer  
Hoist with his own petar.

Laertes plots against Hamlet ; his own treachery recoils on him. Ophelia also seems to be an innocent victim. She is involved in the fate of others. The queen who by mistake drinks the poisoned cup intended for Hamlet, meets her retribution. Perhaps the queen herself is most responsible for all the tragic happenings in the play. She seems to be the evil genius in the play. The king deserves his fate which has been long withheld.

Hamlet's Melancholy the cause of his inaction (Bradley)

"Melancholy," I said, not dejection, nor yet insanity. That Hamlet was not far from insanity is very probable. His adoption of the pretence of madness may well have been due in part to fear of reality, to an instinct of self-preservation, a fore feeling that the pretence would enable him to give some utterance to the load that pressed on his heart and brain, and a fear that he would be unable altogether to repress such utterance. And if the pathologist calls his state melancholia, and even proceeds to determine its species, I see nothing to object to in that, I am grateful to him for emphasizing the fact—that Hamlet's melancholy was no mere common depression of spirit ; and I have no doubt that many readers of the play would understand it better if they read an account of melancholia, in a work on mental diseases. If we like to use the word 'disease' loosely, Hamlet's condition

may be truly called diseased. No exertion of will could have dispelled it. Even if he had been able at once to do the bidding of the Ghost he would doubtless have still remained for sometime under the cloud. It would be absurdly unjust to call Hamlet a study of melancholy, but it contains such a study

But this melancholy is something very different from insanity, in anything like the usual meaning of the word. No doubt it might develop into insanity. The longing for death might become an irresistible impulse to self-destruction, the disorder of feeling and will might extend to sense and intellect, delusions might arise; and the man might become, as we say, incapable and irresponsible. But Hamlet's melancholy is some way from this condition. It is a totally different thing from the madness which he feigns, and he never, when alone or in company with Horatio alone, exhibits the signs of that madness. Nor is the dramatic use of this melancholy, again, open to the objections which would justly be made to the portrayal of an insanity which brought the hero to a tragic end. The man who suffers as Hamlet suffers—and thousands go about their business suffering thus in greater or less degree is considered irresponsible neither by other people nor by himself, he is only too keenly conscious of his responsibility. He is, therefore, so far, quite capable of being a tragic agent, which an insane person, at any rate according to Shakespeare's practice, is not. And, finally, Hamlet's state is not one which a healthy mind is unable sufficiently to imagine. It is probably not further from average experience, nor more difficult to realise than the great tragic passion of Othello, Antony or Macbeth.

Let me try to show now, briefly, how much this melancholy accounts for

It accounts for the main fact, Hamlet's inaction. For the immediate cause of that is simply that his habitual feeling is one of disgust at life and everything in it, himself included,—a disgust which varies in intensity, rising—at-times into longing for death, sinking often into weary apathy but is never dispelled for more than brief intervals. Such a state of feeling is inevitably adverse to any kind of decided action; the body is inert, the mind indifferent or worse, its response is, 'it does not matter,' 'it is not worth while,' 'it is no good.' And the action required of Hamlet is very

exceptional. It is violent, dangerous, difficult to accomplish perfectly, on one side repulsive to a man of honour and sensitive feeling, on another side involved in certain mystery (here come in thus, in their subordinate place, various causes of inaction assigned by various theories). These obstacles would not suffice to prevent Hamlet from acting, if his state were normal, and against these operate, even in his morbid state, healthy and positive feelings, love of his father, loathing of his uncle, desire of revenge, desire to do duty. But retarding motives acquire an unnatural strength because they have an ally in something far stronger than themselves the melancholic disgust and apathy, while the healthy motives, emerging with difficulty from the central mass of diseased feeling, rapidly sink back into it and 'love the name of action.' We see them doing so, and sometimes the process is quite simple, no analytical reflection on the deed intervening between the outburst of passion and the relapse into melancholy. But this melancholy is perfectly consistent also with that incessant dissection of the task assigned, of which the Schlegel-Coleridge theory makes so much .....

Again, (a) this state accounts for Hamlet's energy as well as for his lassitude, those quick decided actions of his being the outcome of a nature normally far from passive, now suddenly stimulated, and producing healthy impulses which work themselves out before they have time to subside. (b) It accounts for the evidently keen satisfaction which some of these actions give to him. He arranges the play-scene with lively interest, and exults in its success, not really because it brings him nearer to his goal, but partly because it has hurt his enemy and partly because it has demonstrated his skill. . . . he looks forward almost with glee to countermining the king's designs in sending him away .... and looks back with obvious satisfaction, even with pride, to the address and vigour he displayed on the voyage. . . these were not the actions on which his morbid self-feeling had centred, he feels in them his old force, and escapes in them from his disgust. (c) It accounts for the pleasure with which he meets old acquaintances, like his 'school-fellows' or the actors. The former observed (and we can observe) in him a 'kind of joy' at first, though it is followed by 'much forcing

of his disposition' as he attempts to keep this joy and his courtesy alive in spite of the misery which so soon returns upon him and the suspicion he is forced to feel (d) It accounts no less for the painful features of his character as seen in the play, his almost savage irritability on one hand and on the other his self-absorption, his callousness, his insensibility to the fates of those whom he despises, and to the feelings even of those whom he loves. These are frequent symptoms of such melancholy, and (e) they sometimes alternate, as they do in Hamlet, with bursts of transitory almost hysterical, and quite fruitless emotion. It is to these last (of which a part of the soliloquy, 'O what a rogue,' gives a good example) that Hamlet alludes when to the Ghost, he speaks of himself as 'lapsed in passion,' and it is doubtless partly his conscious weakness in regard to them that inspires his praise of Horatio as a man who is not 'passion's slave'

Finally, Hamlet's melancholy accounts for two things which seem to be explained by nothing else. The first of these is his apathy or lethargy — so, in the soliloquy in II, ii he accuses himself of being 'a dull and muddy-mettled rascal' who 'peaks (mopes) like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of his cause,' dully indifferent to his cause. So, when the Ghost appears to him the second time, he accuses himself of being Tardy and lapsed in time; and the Ghost speaks of his purpose being almost blunted and bids him not to forget (cf. 'Oblivion') surely what all this points to is not a condition of excessive but useless mental activity (indeed there is, in reality, curiously little about that in the text) but rather one of dull, apathetic, brooding gloom, in which Hamlet, so far from analysing his duty, is not thinking of it at all, but for the time literally forgets it. It seems to me we are driven to think of Hamlet chiefly thus during the long time which elapsed between the appearance of the Ghost and the events presented in the second Act.

The second trait which is fully explained only by Hamlet's melancholy is his own inability to understand why he delays.

Now each critic propounds his own theory about Hamlet. Bradley does it just as Goethe, Schlegel, and Coleridge have done. Bradley has made an elaborate study of Shakespeare's tragedies. The point is whether his theory is to be preferred

to those of Goethe and Coleridge Hamlet seems to reveal manifold aspects of his character to readers, and to learned critics, who are often apt to read themselves into Hamlet's character. The critics seem to concentrate on a single aspect of Hamlet's character and magnify it believing or letting the reader believe that it sums up everything about him. There is an element of truth in each theory but it fails to do justice to Hamlet's character. It is a *complex* character but it ought to be studied as a whole. This complexity of his character cannot be explained as too delicate and shrinking sensibility (which Goethe ascribes to him), or as too much intellectual abstraction which Coleridge sees in him), or deep-seated melancholy (which Bradley discovers) Hamlet's character can have its meaning only in relation to the play, and the play will easily account for the features which otherwise seem to be unintelligible—his melancholy, his cynicism, his feigned madness, his sporadic activity which reveals something of craftiness too, his bitter sarcasm, etc. Hamlet evolved out of the traditional revenge-play, and must necessarily retain some of its noted features reacting upon the hero himself; and it is Shakespeare who reshapes an old revenge-play, there must be new and transcendent elements in it, and this makes Hamlet's character of perennial suggestion, and each critic weaves his fancy and speculation around it.

### Hamlet's Madness

Hamlet's madness is a vexed question that has troubled all critics more or less. Bradley, for example, recommends the reader to consult a medical book on *melancholia* which approaches to, and may develop into madness. In fact the symptoms of madness have been carefully and exhaustively studied and examined, and the test has been applied to Hamlet. It has been asserted by some that Hamlet was actually mad, it has been maintained by others that his mind was partly unhinged by the shock of his mother's incest, others again say that he started feigning madness and ending in going mad, his hysterical outburst at his interview with his mother and at the funeral of Ophelia being quoted as proof.

Now it is part of the scheme of the play that Hamlet should feign madness. Hamlet himself declares:

How strange or odd soe'er I bear my self—  
 As I, perchance, hereafter shall think meet  
To put an antic disposition on.

He is mad with a purpose, and the purpose is to throw his enemies off the scent, and in such guise to seek his revenge. According to the convention of the revenge play the feigning of madness gives a good opportunity for accomplishing revenge. He adopts this device then by necessity. He must disarm the suspicion of the people about him that he has ever been plotting revenge. And as a matter of fact he is able to delude Ophelia, his mother, and even partly Polonius. Polonius and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern might have doubts now and then. Polonius thought that there was method in his madness; to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern it was a "crafty madness". Yet some critics believe that it was actual madness—and they seem to be carried away evidently by the impressions of Ophelia and Hamlet's mother—two women who knew little outside their own sphere, limited as it was. The suspicion of the people having some power of observation, that it was something behind Hamlet's madness, that it was something other than madness, should have convinced the critics and readers that Hamlet was playing a part.

Again, if Hamlet can make his assumed madness pass for real madness, we should give him credit for full possession of his sanity. He must have to hold himself in hand if he is to execute his revenge, the thought of revenge is not for a moment out of his mind and he frets and fumes because he has not been able to execute it quick enough. If he had been actually mad, he could not have so persistently thought of his revenge, nor could he have plotted himself out of the death to which the King was sending him.

To Horatio alone he opens his mind, and in the company of Horatio he behaves as a perfectly sane man. He poses as a madman to his enemies—to Polonius who is an agent of the King, to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern who are spies in the King's pay. He talks very sensibly to the players with his old interest in play acting, which brings back the memory of his university days. A madman could not have instructed the players as he does. His interview with his mother has been cited as proof of his madness. He speaks with the voice of a moral censor to his mother, and he fully

knows what he is about—he must convince his mother, of the sin of living with Claudius—the sin of incest, and scathingly he dissects her vice. A madman could not have spoken with such force of reason and such clear-sightedness of judgment. When the ghost comes there, there is an exchange of words between Hamlet and the ghost—but his mother neither sees nor hears the ghost; and naturally she thinks that Hamlet is mad. It will serve no purpose of his own to pose as mad to his mother, he must rather convince her that he is absolutely sane.

My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,  
And makes as healthful music: 'tis not madness  
That I have utter'd: bring me to the test,  
And I the matter will re word; which madness  
Would gambol from.

This challenge thrown out to his mother should have convinced all critics and readers.

Then there is Ophelia's funeral scene. we have something melodramatic here, and it is Laertes who starts it by leaping into Ophelia's grave before it is filled up. And when Hamlet advances with his speech—"what is he whose grief Bears such an emphasis," he seems to have abandoned his pose. In the grave Hamlet and Laertes close with each other, and then they are separated. He is absolutely sincere and passionate—and, therefore, sane in his utterance:

I loved Ophelia . forty thousand brothers  
Could not, with all their quantity of love,  
Make up my sum What wilt thou do for her ?  
Before Laertes replies, the king cuts in with words :  
O, he is mad, Laertes.

Now Hamlet remembers the part he has forgotten for the moment—this being the only instance when Hamlet is off his guard, and begins a ranting speech which might have suited a madman. The king's words remind him of the part of a madman that he should play—and he plays it perfectly.

'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do:  
Woo't weep ? woo't fight ? woo't fast ? woo't tear thyself ?  
Woo't drink up eisel ? eat a crocodile ?  
I'll do it.



All this ranting cannot prove him a madman. A little while ago he was discoursing on a skull like a cynical philosopher.

Lastly, Shakespeare could not have made a madman the hero of his tragedy. According to the fundamental conception of Shakespearian tragedy, the hero should be a free agent, of course subject to the limitation of circumstances, and of forces operating either within or without, of the wills and actions of others, in any case he must be responsible for his own actions. Now if Hamlet had been a madman, there would be no sense in blaming him for what he does, or making him responsible for the death of so many in the last scene.

Stopford A. Brooke writes of two types of men—the one active, practical, quick-deciding, and so on, and the other sensitive, imaginative, contemplative and idealizing. Stopford A. Brooke writes, "Well, when a person of the one type meets a person of the other, and both are strong examples, each of his own type, either of them can understand the other, and the easiest way to express their want of comprehension is to say, "This person is mad or half mad"—just what Polonius and the king and Queen and Ophelia, but not Horatio, said of Hamlet; just what a number of critics of the play—more or less in proportion as they belong to the type opposite to his—have said about him. They draw attention to many acts and words of Hamlet as tainted with madness, and the more eager to prove this point and their own acumen are the specialists in insanity who, believing themselves to be unanswerable authority on what is madness and what is not, are the very blindest and most foolish of guides in this matter—men, some of whom at least if they had their way would end by shutting up in asylums all the poets, artists, and prophets, all the men and women who do not care for money, who are bored by science and who think that the real fools are those who care for the things of this world.

These sapient fools are sure that Hamlet was mad, or all but mad; and do not ask themselves whether Shakespeare meant him to be mad, or why Horatio never thought him mad, or on the verge of madness; whether a madman can be so sequent as he is in all things he says, or so continuously intelligent along with a weakened brain. At last, driven by a kind of demon they end (like some of the brain investiga-

tors of the present day) by saying that any extraordinary imaginative power, which works beyond the sphere of the analytic reason, is itself madness. All men of genius are mad, genius itself is a kind of madness.

Amazingly funny that is. And when we hear of it all that is left for us to say is. 'That, in a world where the humorist is at a discount, and where due reasons for gaiety are only too few, it is very kind of Providence to make men so amusing. If genius is a madness, Hamlet was mad, and the maddest man that even lived in England was Shakespeare, who made Hamlet.

The fact is that Shakespeare never intended to represent Hamlet as mad or half-mad or verging on madness. He expressly made him a feigner of madness, and when he wished to represent real madness and to contrast it with feigned madness he created the real madness of Ophelia and did it with wonderful truth, and skill. There is not a trace of madness in Hamlet. There is plenty of eccentricity, plenty of fantastic thought and feeling, plenty of wandering and roving imagination, plenty of wild and even whirling phrases and of those phrases which grow out of a consciousness of a world beyond that of the senses, into which consciousness penetrates unaware, which, heard of by those who, like the specialists, are looking out for madness, are quite sufficient to induce them to suggest and asylum."

#### Different Interpretations of Hamlet's Character

Hamlet has been a source of endless speculation to critics and readers, and the main interest has been exclusively fixed on the character and significance of Hamlet. Some one or other aspect of his character has been dwelt up and exaggerated, obscuring our views of the character as a whole. Hamlet is an immensely fascinating and complex character; so every reader and critic speculates about him and reads something of his own into him. T. S. Eliot rightly says, 'These minds often find in Hamlet a vicarious existence for their own artistic realisation. Such a mind had Goethe who made of Hamlet a Werther; and such had Coleridge who made of Hamlet a Coleridge."

We shall start then with Goethe. Goethe quotes.

"The time is out of joint, O cursed spite

He makes this text the starting point of his criticism. "In these words, I imagine, is the key to Hamlet's whole procedure, and to me it is clear that Shakespeare sought to depict a great deed laid upon a soul unequal to the performance of it. In this view I find the piece composed throughout. Here is an oak tree planted in a costly vase, which should have received into it only lovely flowers, the roots spread out, the vase is shattered to pieces."

A beautiful, pure and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve that makes the hero, sinks beneath a burden which it can neither bear nor throw off, every duty is holy to him—this too hard. The impossible is required of him—not the impossible in itself, but the impossible to him. How he winds, turns, agonizes, advances, and recoils, ever reminded, ever reminding himself, and at last almost loses his purpose from his thoughts, without ever again recovering his peace of mind."

Later critics have been more or less influenced by Goethe's views. Even those who propound their own views of Hamlet's character, repeat something of Goethe's. Goethe makes out Hamlet to be delicate, frail, sentimental being—a beautiful, ineffectual angel. It ought to be remembered here that the source of the story is a Danish Saga. It is true that Shakespeare has given a new orientation to the story, but he cannot have, in any case, ignored the spirit of the original. Shakespeare could not have tampered with the original saga-spirit to have transformed Hamlet into a sentimental weakling. It appears from the play itself that he is capable of passionate, energetic action, when necessary.

Coleridge writes, "In Hamlet he (i. e. Shakespeare) seems to have wished to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to the objects of our senses and our meditation on the workings of our minds—an equilibrium between the real and the imaginary worlds. In Hamlet the balance is disturbed. ... We see a great, and almost enormous intellectual activity, and a proportionate aversion to real action, consequent upon it, with all its symptomatic and accompanying qualities. This character Shakespeare places in circumstances, under which it is obliged to act on the spur of the moment—Hamlet is brave and careless of death, but he

vacillates from sensibility, and procrastinates from thought, and loses power of action in the energy of resolve."

Coleridge seems to see himself, mirrored in Hamlet, with his paralysed will, decaying sensibilities and wasted intellectual life. There is an element of truth, in his analysis of Hamlet's character. It is only one aspect of his character that Coleridge emphasizes--the preponderance of intellect in Hamlet and keen sensibility. These critics have all their own prepossessions, and are unable to bring an open mind to the study of the drama. Incapability of action in Hamlet is the point emphasized by these critics beginning with Goethe and ending with Bradley, and each seeks to explain this so-called inaction according to his own notion.

Dowden and Bradley seem to share Goethe's views, but just to correct and supplement them. Dowden holds that Coleridge attaches undue importance to one element in Hamlet's character, and writes, "Hamlet is not merely or chiefly intellectual, the emotional side of his character is quite as important as the intellectual, his malady is as deep seated in his sensibilities, and in his heart as in his brain. Bradley sets down everything to Hamlet's melancholy or rather melancholia, which might be traced back to his love of study and speculation in his days at Wittenburg, and was accentuated by his shock at his mother's incestuous marriage. His sensibility makes him suffer so acutely. According to Bradley his melancholy paralyses his power of will and capacity of action.

This inaction of Hamlet is an illusion—it exists in the imagination of critics only. They would perhaps have been satisfied if Hamlet had rushed at once to his revenge after hearing from the ghost, and as soon as the revenge had been accomplished, the drama would have ended. The delay in action is only apparent. It is a plain fact that without being sure of his ground Hamlet could not have proceeded to his revenge; so the play scene is arranged, and it seems to have held up the revenge. Then he might have killed the king in his devotions; perhaps that is the only opportunity he gets and lets go. No charge of delaying can be made against him when he misses but one chance. The point is that much is left to chance and accident in Hamlet, and the revenge is finally effected by a fortuitous combination of circumstances.

When Hamlet is shipped off to England, there appears little possibility of his returning to Denmark and accomplishing his revenge. The encounter with the pirates brings back Hamlet to Denmark. It is an accident Hamlet happens to be present in the churchyard when Ophelia is brought there to be buried. Then he grapples with Laertes in Ophelia's grave. It is an accident. The deep-laid plot of the king to murder Hamlet miscarries because Hamlet happens to snatch the poisoned rapier out of Laertes' hands, and wounds him with it. The poisoned wine as the second alternative for the purpose of killing Hamlet, is drunk by the queen. The final catastrophe is thus brought about by a series of accidents, but Hamlet is the main actor. There can be no question of delay in the execution of his revenge.

We quote below the remarks of G. B. Harrison in support of our contention. 'The question whether Hamlet was mad, in a medical sense, so furiously debated forty years ago, has rather ceased to interest the present generation, but the further question why did he delay to kill his uncle—has not yet been answered to the general satisfaction. The problem seems not to have caused much excitement for the hundred years, but since the days of Goethe critics and psychologists have invoked all the laws of complex and suppression to explain a phenomenon which was perfectly familiar to any Elizabethan play-goer. Shakespeare's *Hamlet*—it seems almost profane to say it—belongs to the common and popular type of drama known as the Revenge Play, wherein the dramatic motive is not whether the avenger will achieve his object, but how and when. The interest of a Revenge Play was in watching the hero surmounting obstacle after obstacle until finally he reached his victim's heart, but while dramatists laid physical obstacles in the way of revenge, Shakespeare puts intellectual.

It has been rather the fashion to picture Hamlet as a kind of neurotic undergraduate who suffers from sudden spasms of action. Yet none of the other persons in the play takes to this view. No one does his deeds suggest a man who is too thoughtful to act. His obvious and insolent contempt for the king, his impetuosity when he first sees the ghost, his slaying of Polonius, his speed in devising the trap for Claudius, his ruthlessness in disposing of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

and his grim amusement at the surprise that awaits them, his behaviour at the funeral of Ophelia, his ferocity when he kills Claudius, stabbing him first and then forcing the poisoned cup between his lips—these are not the traits of a man who has strayed away from the University. Hamlet, indeed, is the most headstrong and fiery of all Shakespeare's heroes, in thought, in word, and in act, and yet he delays and is for ever cursing himself for his delay."

#### HAMLET—MORE A MAN OF-TODAY THAN OF THE ELIZABETHAN AGE.

"It would be an interesting task to estimate how far the genius of Shakespeare has been impaired for a modern reader by the change in sentiments which the lapse of three crowded centuries has brought. An Elizabethan dramatist could appeal with confidence to sympathies which are evanescent today. *The Merchant of Venice*, for instance, in spite of all its beauty and all its wit, yet bears an air of unreality to us, because of its leading motive, that of Judenbeize, no longer finds an echo outside the limits of Whitechapel. Probably Mr. Irving's histrionic instinct was right when it led him to convert a villain into a hero, and to present the play as an apology for toleration, though this was an idea foreign to Shakespeare and impossible on the boards of the theatre. It is remarkable, however, that there is one tragedy at least in which the normal law is reversed, and which is more vivid more intelligible to us than it could have been to our Elizabethan ancestors. Modern civilization has indeed discarded the ethics of the *vendetta* the moral sentiment which holds revenge for a father's murder to be a binding duty upon the son no longer appears obvious and natural. An effort of the historic imagination is required to grasp its importance as a leading idea in the drama of *Hamlet*. But with the dominant figure, with Hamlet himself, it is otherwise. (A prolonged study of the character leaves one with the startling sense that out of the plenitude of his genius Shakespeare has here depicted a type of humanity which belongs essentially not to his age but to our own.) There was, we know, an older *Hamlet* a popular revenge play, pulsating no doubt, like *Titus Andronicus*, with blood and fire. Into the midst of such a story the poet has deliberately set a modern born out of due time, this high-strung dreamer, who

moves through it to such stragic issues. The key note of Hamlet's nature is the over-cultivation of the mind. He is the academic man, philosopher brought suddenly into the world of strenuous action. The fatal habit of speculation, fatal at Elsinore, however, proper and desirable at Wittenberg, is his undoing cursed with the

"raven scruple

Of thinking too precisely on the event,"

he is predestined to practical failure, from which no delicacy of moral fibre, or truth and intensity of feeling can save him. It is surely no mere accident that so many features in the portrait of Hamlet are reproduced in Mrs Ward's Edward Langham. The worship of intellect, the absorbing interest in music and the theatre, the nervous excitability, the consciousness of ineffectiveness, taking refuge in irony and sarcasm, these and countless other points stamp them as temperaments of kindred mould. (And in both the tragic wool is the same; it is the tragedy of spiritual impotence, of deadened energies and paralysed will, the essential tragedy, of modernity. Hamlet fascinates us, just as Langham fascinates us, because we see in him ourselves, we are all actual or potential Hamlets". E K Chambers

Hamlet is an Artistic Failure—(T S Eliot)

In his essay on Hamlet T S Eliot emphasizes Hamlet's obsession with his mother's incestuous marriage. This obsession complicates the situation for him, and prevents his due execution of revenge. Eliot also touches on conflicting motives which are revealed in his soliloquies. These motives seem to cancel one another. Stoll too discovers a veiled confusion of motive in Hamlet but Eliot proceeds to, point out what its result has been. It leaves the readers unsatisfied. The readers cannot decide what the actual motive of Hamlet is. Whatever excuses or explanations he offers for his delay, satisfy neither himself nor the readers. Eliot says that Hamlet is an artistic failure because the play confuses the readers as much as Hamlet's purpose seems to confuse him.

We quote below T S. Eliot

(1) The kind of criticism that Goethe and Coleridge produced in writing of Hamlet, is the most misleading kind possible. For they both possessed unquestionable critical insight, and

both make their critical observations the more plausible by the substitution—of their own Hamlet for Shakespeare's—which their creative gift effects."

(ii) "Mr. Stoll performs a service in recalling to our attention the labours of the critics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, observing that

"they knew less about psychology than more recent Hamlet critics, but they were nearer in spirit to Shakespeare's art, and as they insisted on the importance of the effect of the whole rather than on the importance of the leading character, they were nearer, in their old-fashioned way, to the secret of dramatic art in general"

(iii) "Mr. Robertson points out, very pertinently, 'how critics have failed in their 'interpretation' of Hamlet by ignoring what ought to be very obvious: that Hamlet is stratification, that it represents the efforts of a series of men, each making what he could out of the work of his predecessors. The Hamlet of Shakespeare will appear to us very differently if, instead of treating the whole action of the play as due to Shakespeare's design, we perceived his Hamlet to be superposed upon much cruder material which persists even in the final form.'

Then Eliot writes: "Of the intractability there can be no doubt. So far from being Shakespeare's masterpiece, the play is most certainly an artistic failure."

The following reasons are given:

(i) "In several ways the play is puzzling, disquieting as is none of the others."

(ii) "Of all the plays it is the longest and is possibly the one on which Shakespeare spent most pains, and yet he has left in it superfluous and inconsistent scenes which even hasty revision should have nipped."

(iii) "The versification is variable. . . Both workmanship and thought are in an unstable position."

"We are surely justified in attributing the play, with the other profoundly interesting play of 'intractable' material and astounding versification, *Measure for Measure*, to a period of crisis, after which follow the tragic successes which culminate in *Coriolanus*. *Coriolanus* may not be as interesting as *Hamlet* but it is with Antony and Cleopatra, Shakespeare's most



assured artistic success. And probably more people have thought Hamlet a work of art because they found it interesting than have found it interesting because it is a work of art. It is the 'Mona Lisa' of literature."

The play starts with the reaction of Hamlet to his mother's incestuous marriage, and that should have motivated the entire play. Robertson points out that the guilt of a mother is an almost intolerable motive for drama. Eliot agrees with him, and then expounds his own view of the matter. "This, however, is by no means the whole story. It is not merely 'the guilt of mother' that cannot be handled as Shakespeare handled the suspicion of Othello, the infatuation of Antony, or the pride of Coriolanus. The subject might conceivably have expanded into a tragedy like these, intelligible, self-complete, in the sunlight. Hamlet, like the sonnets is full of some stuff that the writer could not drag to light, contemplate or manipulate into art. And we search, for this feeling, we find it, as in the sonnets, very difficult to localize."

Eliot writes again, "Hamlet is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible because it is in excess of the facts as they appear. And the supposed identity of Hamlet with his author is genuine to this point, that Hamlet's bafflement at the absence of objective equivalent to his feeling is a prolongation of the bafflement of his creator in the face of his artistic problem. Hamlet is up against the difficulty that his disgust is occasioned by his mother, but that his mother is not an adequate equivalent for it, his disgust envelops and exceeds her. It is thus a feeling which he cannot understand, he cannot objectify it, and it therefore remains to poison life and obstruct action. None of the possible actions can satisfy it, and nothing that Shakespeare can do with the plot can express Hamlet for him. To have heightened the criminality of Gertrude would have been to provide the formula for a totally different emotion in Hamlet; it is just because her character is so negative and insignificant that she arouses in Hamlet the feelings which she is incapable of representing. We must simply admit that here Shakespeare tackled a problem which proved too much for him. Why he attempted it at all is an insoluble puzzle, under compulsion of what experience he attempted to express the inexpressibly horrible, we cannot ever know."

## LOCAL COLOUR AND ATMOSPHERE IN HAMLET

Shakespeare derives the story of *Hamlet* from a Scandinavian saga, and reflects in it the true spirit of the original. The saga atmosphere is reflected both internally and externally. The localization of the scene of a play other than one dealing with England is a part of Shakespeare's art and technique. In *The Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare recaptures the spirit and tone of the Renaissance Italy, so living and penetrating is it that it has been seriously debated whether Shakespeare had visited Italy. Then *Macbeth* reflects the lawless times and primitive savagery so characteristic of Marbeth's age, apart from local colour which convinces us that the scene of the play could not have been laid elsewhere than in the Scotland of a bygone, rude age. It might as well be argued that Shakespeare had visited Scotland, and reconstructed from his imagination the older ruder Scotland.

In getting in the effect of local colour and atmosphere Shakespeare must have depended on his imagination. Shakespeare was essentially a social creature. Where could he have satisfied his social or rather gregarious instinct than by frequenting taverns? And it was at taverns that he had met the globe-trotters of the day, and their own experiences and the travellers' tales must have saturated his imagination. The magic of the local colour and atmosphere in his plays can be thus explained. Then the marvellous powers of his insight and intuition must have put him on the right track to explore the mental processes of his characters in their proper setting. This is very particularly true of *Hamlet*. *Hamlet* embodies the old pagan spirit of the Viking—the spirit of the Old English epic, *Beowulf*. A savage delight in bloodshed (from which *Hamlet*, touched with Shakespeare's humanism, seems to shrink), gloom of temper and disposition, mystic brooding in death are all present in *Hamlet* as in *Beowulf*. The play seems to be so baffling to critics, even to T. S. Eliot and Robertson, because it is play with many facets and we fail to unfold the true spirit of the play if we give loose rein to our fancy or prepossession as critics have usually done. We cannot afford to overlook the real background and setting of the play—the bleak northern sky, the settled gloom of the mind, the brooding sense of mystery, inseparable from earthly life.

Then there are minor details which evoke the Denmark of Hamlet's age. Allusions to contemporary Danish life and customs serve to enforce the impression of *verisimilitude*. Often Shakespeare shows up the intemperance of the Danes, he does not forget the Kettledrum, their national instrument, he chooses Danish names for his characters—Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The University of Willenburg where Hamlet and Horatio had studied together, was a noted centre of culture. The castle of Elsinore where the great part of the scene was laid, had been but lately built in Shakespeare's time. This local knowledge might have reached Shakespeare from members of a travelling company of English actors who had visited Denmark in 1585. Some of them such as George Bryan and Thomas Pope later joined Shakespeare's company.

Boas writes: "It is evident that in this rude tale of treachery and bloodshed Shakespeare found only the roughest materials, for his drama, yet it was a happy accident that led to choose this Scandinavian saga as his framework of his most representative play. For this the English Muse in her full-grown maturity turns her face towards the region where she was cradled in fancy. Hamlet the Dane claims kinship with Beowulf, and in the space of a thousand years that separates them, the surrounding features of nature have but little changed. The air that blows over the platform at Elsinore is as ripping and eager as when it bellied the sails of the Viking's galleys and the opposite cliff with dreadful summit still beetles o'er his base into the sea. Echoes of the primitive age reach us in such episodes as the 'angry parle,' in which Hamlet's father smote the sledded Polacks on the ice and the sea fight wherein Hamlet himself is taken prisoner."

### THE SUPERNATURAL IN HAMLET

The ghost urging Hamlet to take revenge is an avenging spirit which is a part of the convention of the revenge play. Shakespeare in re-casting a revenge play such as *Hamlet* is, has necessarily to take over the avenging spirit. Here too the difference between Kyd's manner and Shakespeare's is noteworthy. In Kyd the ghost struts about on the stage, crying, "Hamlet revenge". This is something crude and sophisticated. Shakespeare presents the ghost bodily, because

he is seen by every body standing on the platform before the castle. The details of dress and armour can have no doubt about whose ghost he is. The ghost is invested with majesty and awe, and appearing at night is but a shadow, stalking away without words. It is an artistic presentation of the ghost in spite of the materiality of the apparition. And the ghostly thrill that is produced, is as it should be. The appearance of the ghost is very properly timed. The dialogue between Bernardo and Francisco, the changing guards at the zero hour of midnight suggest an atmosphere of terror and mystery. The opening scene is therefore very significant—and at once grips our imagination. The ghost, as it later appears comes to demand the revenge of his foul and unnatural murder—and the motive of revenge is the pivot of the whole play. This motive later becomes complicated, and in the beginning it sets the play going.

The question whether the ghost is subjective or objective has been debated. In the opening scene the ghost is objective because there is more than one witness. Then when the ghost appears again to Hamlet, and reveals his secret mission he is seen by others too; these others do not hear the ghost speak because the ghost beckons Hamlet away to a lonely place. The ghost speaks to Hamlet, and Hamlet makes his promise to do his bidding; the ghost is then an objective reality to Hamlet.

In the bed-chamber of the queen the ghost appears to Hamlet and speaks to him, but the queen neither sees nor hears the ghost. It is an open question here whether the ghost is an hallucination or a reality. Some critics suppose that it is an hallucination, they seem to agree with the queen, forgetting that the ghost had twice appeared before in bodily shape, and believe that the ghost is the "coinage", "the bodiless creation" of Hamlet's disordered brain. The queen fails to see ghost, even when Hamlet points him out to her.

"Why look you there! look, how it steals away!"

It has been suggested that the queen is blind to the manifestations of the spiritual world because she is still lapsed in sin.

The question whether Shakespeare believed in ghosts does not arise here. The ghost as the spirit of revenge

appears in *Hamlet* in conformity to the convention of the revenge-play. The question, therefore, is how Shakespeare disposes of the matter. Whether the ghost is subjective or objective seems to be beside the point. In fact people of Shakespeare's age believed in ghosts and witches. They would certainly have been disappointed if the ghost had not appeared to them in bodily form, or if they had not heard him speak. Of course some critics (e.g. Bradley) hold that Hamlet being oppressed with melancholy or melancholia, must have been subject to hallucination, but as we have seen, it is only in one instance that doubt has been expressed whether the ghost is a reality or hallucination, that is, when Hamlet is in his mother's bed chamber. As a matter of fact whether the ghost was not a ghost, but an hallucination, did not bother Shakespeare.

Shakespeare had to bring in a ghost who had a function of his own in the play, and he has shown a subtle skill in describing the mental as well as physical reactions of those who see the ghost, and their terror and sense of haunting mystery infect the audience or readers. We may first see how Hamlet himself (the most rational and intellectual of all characters in the play) is affected.

What may this mean,  
 I hat thou, dead corse again in complete steel  
 Revisit'st these glimpses of the moon,  
 Making night hideous and we fools of nature  
 So horrible to shake our disposition,  
 With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?

We quote below from *Blackwood's Magazine*, February, 1818 'With all the mighty power which this tragedy possesses over us, arising from qualities now very generally described, yet without that kingly shadow, who throws over it such preternatural grandeur, it could never have gained so universal an ascendancy over the minds of men. Now the reality of a ghost is measured to that state of imagination in which we ought to be held for the fullest powers of tragedy. The appearance of such a phantom at once throws open those recesses of the inner spirit over which flesh was closing. Magicians, thunder-storms, and demons produce upon me something of the same effect. I feel myself brought instan-

taneously back to the creed of childhood. Imagination then seems not a power which I exert, but an impulse which I obey. Thus does the Ghost in Hamlet carry us into the presence of eternity.

Never was a more majestic spirit more majestically revealed. The shadow of his kingly grandeur and his warlike might, rest massively upon him. He passes before us sad, silent, stately. He brings the whole weight of the tragedy in his disclosures. His speech is ghost-like and blends with ghost conceptions. The popular memory of his words proves how profoundly they sink into our souls. The preparation for his first appearance is most solemn. The night watch—the more common effect on the two soldiers—the deeper effect on the next party, and their speculations—Horatio's communication with the shadow, that seems as it were half way between theirs and Hamlet's—his adjurations—the degree of impression which they produce in the Ghost's mind who is about to speak but for the due ghost-like interruption of the bird of morning,—all these things lend our minds up to the last pitch of breathless expectation; and while yet the whole weight of mystery is left hanging over the play we feel that some dread disclosure is reserved for Hamlet's ear and that apparition from world unknown is still a partaker of the noblest of all earthly affections.

The effect at first produced by the apparition is ever afterwards wonderfully sustained. I do not merely allude to the touches of realization which in the poetry of the senses, pass away from no memory—such as 'the star' 'Where now it burns' 'The sepulchre' 'The complete steel'—'The glimpses of the moon'—'Making night hideous'—'Look how pale he glares'—and other wild expressions, that are like fastenings by which the mind clings to its terror.' I rather allude to the whole conduct of the Ghost. We ever behold in it a troubled spirit leaving its place of suffering to revisit the life it had left, to direct and command a retribution that must be accomplished. He speaks of the pain to which he is gone, but that fades away in the purpose of his mission, 'Pity me not'. He bids Hamlet revenge, though there is not the passion of revenge in his discourse. The penal fires have purified the grosser man. The spectre utters but a moral declaration of

guilt, and swears its living son to the fulfilment of a righteous vengeance".

("T. C." in *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1818)

### Threefold Character of Ophelia

"I doubt whether any character in Shakespeare is more completely a victim to the requirements of tragedy. We may or may not have two Hamlets, but we certainly have no less than three Ophelias. There is first the perfect heroine, lovely and lovable, strong and true who would have made the tragedy altogether impossible; she could command to the death a brother's affection? And before whom a noble prince bowed with such passionate devotion that forty thousand brothers could not with all their quantity of love make up his seem, who rewarded him, moreover, with a love so entire, so intense, and so divine that her mind and then her body were laid as a sacrifice upon its altar. This is the Ophelia we place first in our love and our remembrance, and of her we could write volumes, chaste as ice and pure as snow, a 'green girl', said her foolish father, and for one, let us admit, he spoke to some purpose, but the wording might have been more graceful! "Pure as the lines of green that streak the white of the first snowdrops' inner leaves"; a maiden innocent as innocent as innocence, childlike like childhood, yet very woman of every woman, whom a queen would gladly take to her as a daughter whose bride-bed a queen would have decked with flowers; who was inportuned with the love of Hamlet in honourable fashion, besmirched with no soil, no contel. who returned his love with such maiden modesty that the selfish warning of her brother, the coarse injunctions, the impertinent inquiries of her father, the fantastic insinuations of her half frenzied lover, could not convict her of one evil thought she in whose grave that brother and lover contended for loving martyrdom she from whose fair and unpolluted flesh may violets spring. Then there is the Ophelia who (Hamlet-like) makes tragedy more than possible, doll and dupe and castard, who first deserts her lover and then betrays him; of her I have neither will nor patience to say any more; nor more than this of the third Ophelia—Ophelia the worlding who, if a creature of Shakespeare's age and world, is certainly not to be again found in Shakespeare's plays she who in the play scene, meets Hamlet's coarse,

mockery not even with the reproof of silence, but rather with a subtle encouragement.

This threefold character I repeat is Shakespeare's Ophelia, and unlike Ophelia's is the tripartite character of Caliban where in one being we have embodied—or rather an attempt to embody—the barbarian child of nature, the debased negro slave, and the mediaeval hag-born monstrosity.

About this time Shakespeare seems to have lost some of his faith in woman; hence partly at least such characters as the second and third of the above mentioned Ophelias. Proportionately, the poet insists on the value and the virtue of friendship between man and man, and from "Frailty, Thy name is woman," we turn to "I will wear him in my heart's core".. Morton Luce-

### Did Hamlet Love Ophelia

\* The answer to the question whether Hamlet loved Ophelia is not as simple and obvious as it looks. Attention has been drawn to the varying features of Ophelia's character. It may well appear if Hamlet loved Ophelia, whether that love could have endured long, as Ophelia proved to be otherwise than Hamlet had expected her to be—it is not a question of her being innocent and simple as a child. It may be doubted whether her very virtue proved to be her worst defect—and enemy.

Ophelia's utterances in her madness (when she could have no control either on her thought or on her speech) have been a subject of much speculation. In her madness she sings scraps of some old ballad songs, now the subject and hints of these songs are regarded by some critics as indelicate, and it is inferred that Ophelia had been Hamlet's mistress until the crisis the duty of avenging his father's murder—disrupted the relations—and that it is her own experience which speaks out in the songs she sings.

F. C. Kolbe writes, "For instance, it is a well known mark of insanity that a mind once wholesome and affectionate comes by the law of contrast to be, coarse in speech and to hate what previously it had loved. Ophelia's pure mind breaks out so in her madness. King Lear loses all reticence. Hamlet, knowing this psychological law, affects it. So, also,



does Edgar as Tom O'Bedlam When, therefore, E. V. Lucas says he can never forgive Hamlet for what he says to Ophelia, he misses the point It was essential to Hamlet's design that Polonius should think him really mad and nothing was more persuasive to that end than his attitude towards Ophelia Moreover, the only way he had or seemed to himself to have, of lessening the blow to her heart was that she should think him mad. His words do not read pleasantly to us now but they are psychologically true, and they were spoken, not in ribaldry, but in anguish of soul "

Kolbe states what may appear to be a general law, but it throws no light on Ophelia's relations with Hamlet On the evidence of scraps of songs which the moderns may regard as indelicate Arlidge Nicoll assumes that Ophelia had illicit relations with Hamlet. The songs which were put into Ophelia's mouth because they were popular in Shakespeare's days, can give no evidence of Ophelia's immorality. We should rather trust Ophelia's direct testimony that Hamlet loved her in honourable fashion All that we know of Ophelia goes to show that she was blameless and innocent, that she could not have lost her virtue

Hamlet must have loved her in the beginning, and in the conflux of circumstances this love had faded away, or gone to sleep. Ophelia confesses everything to her father. In his cynical view Polonius suspects Hamlet's intentions But what Polonius thinks of Ophelia is more to the point. She speaks "like a green girl, unsifted in such perilous circumstance." It is a left-handed compliment to Ophelia's child like innocence and simplicity.

We may well believe that Hamlet loved Ophelia in an honourable way. His mother's incestuous marriage, followed by the ghost's soul-searing revelations, destroyed his faith in all woman kind. Secondly, the task of revenge imposed upon him, and needing his constant vigilance, banished the thought of love from his mind Thirdly, with his acute sensibility he was able to sense the game when Ophelia was "loosed" to him; Ophelia allowed herself to be used as a decoy. If Hamlet had yet any respect for Ophelia's integrity, it was now completely dissipated.

So Hamlet's love almost perished or lay in suspended consciousness until it waked to life again in the funeral scene.

Perhaps there is the truth of the heart in his hysterical, exaggerated outburst

I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers  
Could not, with all their quantity of love  
Make up my sum.

The sincerity of his declaration, notwithstanding hyperbolic language cannot be questioned.

The nunnery scene has been misunderstood by many. If Hamlet loved Ophelia, and there is reason to believe otherwise—Hamlet in his trouble naturally expected some sympathy of Ophelia—at least he might have turned to her for relief, as he did to Horatio, but Ophelia had little of her own to give Hamlet, for she was absolutely dominated by her father, and as the result of it she was crippled in womanly intuition and sensibility. A great demand was made upon her by Hamlet in his anguish—almost too great for her to meet even partially in the nunnery scene. Hamlet not only utters his disillusioned views, but discloses his anxiety that Ophelia should be saved from the corruption all around her. He can mean nothing else by his repeated cries, "Get thee to a nunnery." It bears evidence of his love for Ophelia, and it still persists

### Popularity of Hamlet

"In it we come to the most famous of all Shakespeare's plays, indeed to the most famous play in all the world. It is also, probably, a play which gives us most of the mind and temper of Shakespeare, at least on the graver side. It owes little or nothing to any one but him. When *Julius Caesar* is read or played, we are interested before our eyes or ears catch a word. Caesar is one of the two or three most famous names in history. Hamlet is nothing but what he has been made by Shakespeare. Saxo Grammaticus had given him the name and Kyd may have sounded it on English boards. But if Shakespeare had not echoed it we may be quite certain that except to the learned and curious, the word Hamlet would have carried with it no suggestion at all. Now anybody who reads at all has read *Hamlet*. Many have read it, or seen it acted twenty or fifty, or even hundred times. Books to be counted by the thousand have been written about it. It is obvious that its numerous problems cannot be discussed

here. Most of them, no doubt, exist mainly in the study; and here as always, we have to remember that Shakespeare wrote for the stage where people have neither time nor inclination to puzzle themselves over obscurities or inconsistencies. Many questions too, which mere reading cannot answer, such as Hamlet's attitude to Ophelia, had then their answer in the tone and manner of the actor. But we cannot recover those answers now, the actor of to-day has not got Shakespeare to direct him, but only Shakespeare's text to interpret as best he can."—*John Bayley*

"I do not suppose that there is any product of modern genius that has been more written about, or created a greater curiosity than *Hamlet*. The *Divina Commedia* may, perhaps at those points rank with it, but both derive the eager impulse they have given to curious search and to the impulse to write about them, first from the extraordinary simplicity of the of the main lines of humanity in each character they delineate, and secondly from an actually extraordinary variety and subtlety with which, always within those simple lines, each separate character is imagined and wrought into a living soul.

The simple lines, for example, on which the characters of Hamlet, the king, Horatio, Ophelia and the Queen are drawn, and on which the plot is made are within the comprehension of the most uneducated intellect and for this reason as well as for the striking simplicity of *mise en scene*, we find that *Hamlet* is as great a favourite with the gallery as with the stalls, with the village audience in a barn as with an audience of 'academies'; when it is acted by a strolling company, or by the leading actors of England, Germany, or France. Everyone understands the story, is interested in its action and characters, in the vivid and fatal movement of it. A child would comprehend the outlines of Hamlet's story. An alert boy or girl, on seeing the play, would probably ask the same questions we ask. Did Hamlet believe the Ghost? Was he really in love with Ophelia? Did he talk such nonsense and such sense together? If he thought the king had really murdered his father, why did he not kill the king at once? Was he mad or only pretending? These and many others are simple questions which naturally arise? And I am not sure whether the answers to them are not quite simple too. They would be if Shakespeare had not troubled

but answers and confused our minds with his addition to the simple outlines of the most subtle and complex representation of the thoughts and feelings of the characters. The more we hear of the inner life, the less we are able to say clearly why they did this or that, the more subtle and the less simple seems the true answer to the questions"—*Stopford A. Brook*.

## CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

### HAMLET

We have to take note of the theories started about Hamlet by Goethe, Coleridge, and last by Bradley. We have referred to these theories above, and pointed out that they are inadequate Hamlet's character. It will not do to pick out this or that aspect of his character and elaborate it. His character should be taken as a whole, and in relation to the play in which he figures, and in relation to the stage technique and convention of the revenge-play.

Goethe seems to discover in Hamlet the individualism and lyrical egotism of Werther, and Hamlet seems to be no more than a sentimental weakling. Coleridge seems to see in Hamlet a reflection of himself—his physical and spiritual incapacity, his wasted purpose. Bradley does not wholly discard their views, and arrives at a sort of summing-up by elaborating his theory of melancholy which, according to him, explains everything about Hamlet.

It has been pointed out above that Shakespeare works up an old revenge-play in *Hamlet*, and in course of doing so he has transformed the character of Hamlet. First, it may be noted that Shakespeare has given Hamlet a searching intellect, profound sensibility, intense passion, and a tendency to self-analysis. Shakespeare has certainly re-oriented the character, and to trace its likeness to the original seems to be difficult—and hence the character has been treated as it is in itself without any reference to its source. A character is determined by its purpose. The purpose of Hamlet is to avenge the murder of his father—and in relation to this purpose Hamlet's character has been judged.

The delay in the execution of his revenge is a matter that seems to call for explanation. And critics have given various reasons. It is recognized that he has to contend with

both external and internal difficulties. Among external difficulties may be mentioned the precautionary steps, taken by the king, and the intrigues of Polonius. There is no doubt that the king goes about guarded, and it is a fact too that Hamlet rarely finds him alone. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are employed to spy on him; let it be noted too that in the whole course of the play Hamlet and the king meet only twice or thrice. Bradley seems to emphasize his internal difficulties, and reduces the whole trouble to his melancholy.

Then Hamlet is charged with inaction. If due weight is given to his external difficulties, the charge of inaction will appear to be ill conceived. Dowden holds that Hamlet is capable only of spasmodic action. He writes, "Together with such an intellectual and such a moral nature Hamlet has in him something dangerous—a will capable of being roused to sudden and desperate activity. It is a will which is determined to action by the flash and flame of an excitable temperament, or by those sudden impulses or inspirations, leaping forth from a sub-conscious self, which comes almost like revelation and the decree of Providence. It is thus that he suddenly conceives the possibility of the king's guilt, on the accidental arrival of the players, and proceeds without delay to put the matter to the test, suddenly overwhelms Ophelia with his reproaches of womanhood, suddenly stabs the eaves dropper behind the arras, suddenly as if under some irresistible inspiration, sends his companions on ship-board to their death, suddenly boards the pirates, suddenly grapples with Laertes in the grave, suddenly does execution on the guilty king, plucks the poison from Horatio's hand, and gives his dying voice for a successor to the throne".

It has been pointed out above that an attempt has been made to rationalize the motive of revenge, and if the delay is admitted, it is then sufficiently accounted by the circumstances in the play and by the mental reaction of Hamlet himself. The delay is, it should be remembered, a part of the revenge motive in a revenge play—and it needs no rationalizing. Then there is a veiled confusion of motives in Hamlet, as pointed out by Stall. In his soliloquies Hamlet refers to more than one motive for his delay, and we do not know which of these motives we should take to be true. In fact those motives seem to rule out one another. We cannot believe with Coleridge that intellection renders him incap

able of action. Nor can we believe with Goethe that Hamlet is a tender youth of acute sensibilities, unequal to the task confronting him. When Bradley says that melancholy saps his spirit and energy, and explains everything about him, we should say that melancholy is but one of the elements in his character.

(1) Hamlet's grief and disillusion: Hamlet keeps his mourning on after Claudius has been stilled king, and married his mother. In the council of the king where we first see Hamlet, the king and his mother remonstrate with him for prolonging his grief. He gets impatient with his mother taking the side of the king. His mother seems to have implied that it is a show of grief, and Hamlet at once flares up

These indeed seem,

For they are actions that a man might play ;

But I have that within which passeth show,

These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

In the soliloquy that follows immediately we see into his mind. It expresses his loathing of life, his cynicism, his disillusion. There is nothing of a pose in it. How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seem to him all the uses of this world—a garden that grows to seed, and is possessed by things rank and gross in nature. He has been brooding over his mother's incestuous marriage, and this is the secret of his loathing of life, of his disillusion and cynicism. He cries out,

"Frailty, thy name is woman!"

It is his mother's conduct that shatters his faith in woman-kind. He seems to be a little too apt to generalize. But we ought to realize here that his mother's defection from his father whom he idolized, must have deeply shaken his nature—and his hasty generalization is excusable.

(2) Hamlet's intellectual subtlety and keen sensibility

Hamlet might have developed his intellectual subtlety, acute perception and a speculative turn of mind at the university of Wittenberg. He came from the university to attend his father's funeral, and he found himself in surroundings to which his mind violently reacted; the revelry of the king, the corruption of the court, repel him.

This heavy headed revel east and west,  
Makes us traduced and tax'd of other nations.

The manner of his father's murder, the adultery of his mother which are revealed in their details to Hamlet by the ghost set up a great commotion in his nature. He takes out his note book and writes in it "that one may smile, and smile, be a villain." It may seem to be a matter of meaningless triviality, but it seems to be a psychological necessity so that he may avoid crumbling under the stunning blow of the ghost's disclosure. Quiller-couch writes, "Reading the commentators one would think that to discover your father had been murdered and your mother to be an incestuous adulteress were all in the day's work. So they fall to discovering it to be strange, nay—even a little absurd, that a man after such shock should call for his tablets, can they not see that under such a shock a decent man must dread that his mind is going? Remember thee!" "Remember thee" is the word tolling above all the chaos in his brain, and as a drowning man at a straw, he snatches the tablets. Men in such extremity always snatch at some concrete or some trivial thing."

Some are inclined to think, that Hamlet makes too much of a fuss over his mother's marriage, for such marriage happens, pretty frequently in these days, and noison ever breaks his heart over it. In Shakespeare's days such marriage was considered illegal, but what is more to the point is that it outraged Hamlet's moral sensibilities. Every body feels that there is something rotten in the state of Denmark. No one is more conscious of it than Hamlet, confronted with his mother's conduct. This makes the revenge so complicated an affair, it must be something more than mere revenge; it must be, if possible, a purgation of the state.

The time is out of joint, O cursed spite  
That ever I was born to set it right!

The vice and corruption of the time press hard upon his brain and imagination, and he finds revenge a tremendous task. His moral sensibility, his delicacy of feeling and sentiment, his high-strung nature are shocked beyond recovery by the condition of things in Denmark.

(3) His nervous irritability : There was a strain of idealism in Hamlet ; that is why he was made so unhappy by what he saw in Denmark, and coming straight from the university of Wittenberg, one, endowed with less keen sensibilities, or less refinement of taste and feeling, would have taken the thing as it was and eaten and slept in peace instead of holding himself aloof as Hamlet does. Hamlet seems to have been perpetually tormented by his perception of what is, as against what should be. His nervous irritability is caused by this perception

He is blamed for his rudeness to Polonius and to Ophelia. Polonius is a garrulous, egoistical fool who thrusts himself upon Hamlet and it is not to be wondered at that he is deliberately rude to Polonius. He is always aware that Polonius is after him as a game to be hunted down, and in his gibes and taunts he gives relief to his mental tension. He cannot tolerate the sanctimonious airs of Polonius. Pretending to be mad, when asked by Polonius whether he knows him (Polonius), Hamlet says that he is a fish monger, if he were not a fish monger he wishes that he were as honest a man then he adds piquently :

"Ay Sir, to be honest as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand."

If we again examine the cause of his rudeness to Ophelia we cannot blame him. We refer to the nunnery scene (III. 1.) When Hamlet enters, he is cute enough to see (in spite of all his apparent listlessness) that the devotional exercises in which she is engaged are a mere show ; he knows too that her father is eaves dropping, and must have been hurt to know that she will let herself be used as a decoy—she upon whom he has counted. And when Hamlet asks her where her father is, she replies that he is at home—and Hamlet knows that he is behind the scene. He has good reason to lose patience with her ; Ophelia fails him too—this is the unkindest cut of all.

(4) His loneliness : Hamlet has none to share the trouble of his mind with. It is connected with his mother's hasty marriage, he has been brooding over it and to relieve his heart he can tell it to nobody. How is a son to proclaim the shame of his mother ? He must bear it all alone. In his anguish he cries out :



But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue.  
He keeps unto himself, perhaps by inclination, and more  
driven by circumstances. A lonely and suffering man, he  
must have yearned for sympathy. When he sees friends  
he warms up spontaneously, but he could share his trouble  
with none. He can open his mind to Horatio alone, and  
expresses himself in sarcasm

Thrift, thrift, Horatio! The funeral baked meats 7  
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables,

Things are getting so messed up in his mind that the  
uttering of them in bitter taunts or in the incoherent talk of  
a mad man has become a necessity to him. Secondly he  
needs human sympathy, he might have expected it from  
Ophelia, but Ophelia goes over to the enemy camp. He can  
count on Horatio alone, but it is doubtful whether he has ever  
told Horatio everything.

(5) His friendship and love: Hamlet is a man to value  
his friends, because he needs them so much in his lonely,  
musings life. But he turns away from Rosencrantz and  
Guildestern when he sees that they are being used as tools  
by the king, and that their business is to spy on him. He  
can only turn to Horatio, and it is a friendship, based on  
genuine admiration. Perhaps he discerns in Horatio  
things which he lacks and which he should like to possess,  
it is a case of his being drawn to the unlike

For thou hast been

As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,  
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards  
Hast ta'en with equal thanks and bless'd are those  
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,  
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger  
To sound what stop she please

He takes Horatio alone into his confidence about the task  
of revenge. He can be generous in his friendship, he might  
have been friends with Laertes too, but Laertes has too small  
a soul, and then the cordial relations that might have existed  
between the two are altered by the circumstances of Polonius'  
death.

Hamlet loved Ophelia, but certain complications arise  
and react upon this ov: His mother's disloyalty to the

revered memory of his father is a shock which shakes his faith in womankind. Secondly, Ophelia seems to have little strength of character, and allows herself to be used as a pawn by her father. Ophelia greatly disappoints Hamlet. Hamlet reasonably counted on her standing by him, but she is totally dominated by her father and brother. When Hamlet finds her of little account and playing into the hands of her father and king, he turns away in pain from her. It is a matter of disillusionment, but his love does not die. In the scene of her funeral he declares,

I loved Ophelia forty thousand brothers  
Could not, with all their quantity of love,  
Make up my sum,

### THE KING

Claudius is a crafty villain and manages all things without arousing suspicion. Hamlet hits off his character in his moment of anguish after the ghost has left him

That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;  
At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark.

He watches Hamlet with suspicion, and makes an attempt with the help of the queen to win him over. He is an oily, smoothtongued villain. By his "witchcraft of wit", as the ghost alleges, he wins over Gertrude to his lust. While the crown should have gone to Hamlet after his father's death, Claudius wins over the people and the nobles to his election as King of Denmark. He must have artfully plausible manners and speech, and so he can have his own way without appearing to be autocratic.

He does not wholly lack the Kingly dignity; though Hamlet compares him to a satyr by the side of his father, who is a Hyperion. At least he conducts himself with seeming decency and enjoys the respect of his courtiers and the esteem of his queen. A crafty villain might make a very good king, and Claudius might have proved to be so but for the difficult circumstances with which he had to deal. Yet in spite of odds he manages things pretty well. Norway gives him trouble in the beginning of his reign, and he composes the matter by sending an embassy to Norway. He is cautious and crafty; he suspects Hamlet, and guards him well against the danger until he falls a victim to his own machinations.

Dover Wilson supposes that Claudius draws his inspiration from Italy. He is of the Machiavillian type and his policy depends on spying, eaves dropping, secret poison. In those days Italy was known to have perfected the art of poisoning and we find Claudius to be an accomplished poison. He devised the fencing match as a safe way of disposing of Hamlet, and a poisoned rapier was to be used by Laertes in the fencing match; as an alternative, he had a poisoned cup ready for Hamlet. And the devilish plot rightly recoils on him, on Lactes and on the queen.

Claudius must have possessed a strong will power—it is a gift of all Shakesperian villains, and it enabled him to deaden his conscience. He does not seem to have persecuted by remorse. Twice only he seems to have breathed of his guilt. Polonius proposing to use Ophelia as a decoy, makes the following remark.

With devotion's visage  
And pious action we do sugar o'er  
The devil himself

This seems to have awakened Claudius, conscience. He whispers to himself that what Polonious remarks is too true, for he himself has been playing the same game. Then we find him at devotions. He has a momentary touch of remorse but it can mean nothing, for he is not going to part with the gift of his crime.

#### GERTRUDE ✓

Gertrude has some ambiguity about herself. More or less passive and non-resisting, she seems to be dragged along with the tide of circumstance. She is not privy to the foul murder of her husband. Certainly she could not have been so depraved as to marry knowingly the murderer of her husband. Her readiness to marry Claudius immediately after the mysterious death of her husband is a crime that Hamlet cannot forgive her. Hamlet rightly protests against her conduct by saying.

You cannot call it love; for at your age  
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,  
And waits upon the judgment.

In his condemnation of her hasty marriage he cries out in his first soliloquy:

O, most wicked speed !  
 It is not, nor it cannot come to, good.  
 He remembers how  
 She would hang on him,  
 As if increase of appetite had grown  
 By what it fed on.

Her conduct totally shatters Hamlet's faith in womankind.  
"The expense of spirit in a waste of shame is lust in action." Perhaps the play of Hamlet traces the tragic effect of "lust in action". The queen's fundamental weakness is lust—and she proves to be the evil genius of the play.

She seems to be sensual, unimaginative, dull in perception and sensibility but she must have some physical attraction, for Hamlet's father seems to have doted on her :

So loving to my mother,  
 That he might not between the winds of heaven  
 Visit her face too roughly.

And it is for her physical attraction—she must have been voluptuous too—that Claudius poisons his brother in the garden. Claudius himself confesses to this fascination :

My virtue or my plague, be't either which  
 She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,  
 That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,—  
 I could not but by her.

Her fatal beauty (which, is not alluded to, we should assume) works all the evil in the play. Or she may be regarded as the blind instrument of fate. Her seductive charm drags down Claudius to treachery and murder and brings about the death of her husband; and in consequence her son is driven to maddening distraction and confusion of will and passion and Ophelia to actual madness, it involves too the murder of Polonius; in fact all the tragic happenings are to be traced to her laxity of will and purpose, and to her physical passion. The nemesis that falls upon the King involves her too.

Gertrude has not, however, been painted as a depraved woman. Any other writer would have, in like circumstances drawn her without any redeeming feature in her character and rendered her simply frightful or loathsome. There

is a mixture of good and evil in her. She is enmeshed in a series of consequences and by her own recklessness, or want of judgment, or perverse passion. Her own tenderness, for Hamlet keeps her a mother. No less touching is her affection for Ophelia. It might have made her really happy to see Hamlet and Ophelia united in wedlock which might have given her son a normal order of life, putting an end to "the flash and outbreak of a fiery mind".

I hop'd those shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife,  
I thought they bride bed to deck'd sweet maid,  
And not have strew'd thy grave.  
This is the voice of grief and disappointment.

#### POLONIUS ✓

Polonius is an old garrulous fool with the twist of a knave in him. He is the chief councillor of the King. He is very apt at pursuing a tortuous policy, with infinite trust in his own wisdom and experience, and at poking his nose into the affairs of others.

His character is revealed in the first scene of the second act. He is sending Reynaldo to Paris with money and letters for his son. He instructs Reynaldo in the art of spying, he must spy upon his son too. Here is a sample of instructions he issues to Reynaldo in this matter.

Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth :  
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,  
With windlasses and with assays of bias  
By indirections find direction out

We see the kind of policy he pursues. He is well stocked with maxims which he trots out on every occasion, and which help to conceal his stupidity.

Constantly nagging and meddlesome as he is, he makes domestic life a hell to Ophelia. He would preach down her heart. His solicitude for her well-being, particularly with reference to Hamlet's offered love, is the worst kind of paternal tyranny. Coarseness and cynicism mark his conversation with Ophelia when all that he means is to warn her against Hamlet's love which he suspects to be anything but honourable

Ophelia. He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders  
Of his affection to me.

Polonius Affection ! pooh ! You speak like a green girl,  
Unsiltd in such perilous circumstances.

Do you believe his tenders, as you call them ?  
He adds in a cynical tone :

Tender yourself more dearly,  
Or—not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,  
Running it thus—you will tender me a fool.

After his conversation with Ophelia he is convinced that Hamlet's madness is due to love, and he makes much of this extraordinary discovery of his to the King and queen and he inflicts upon them a long, tedious speech, claiming all the time that brevity is the soul of wit. He takes undue credit for his discovery of the cause of Hamlet's madness and nothing could have better demonstrated his ineffectiveness.

And I do think, or else this brain of mine  
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure,  
As it hath used to do, that I have found,  
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

He courts his fate by his own meddlesomeness—and invokes little sympathy in us. Hamlet rightly characterizes him when he has killed him :

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell, —  
I took thee for thy better, take thy fortune, —  
Thou finds't to be too busy is some danger.

We do not know whether Polonius is meant to be a satire, but he seems to be a typical figure, having passed all life in court intrigue, in hypocrisy, in corrupting his fellow creatures until there is little left in him that is human.

Johnson's description of Polonius is not satisfactory. 'The idea of dotage encroaching upon wisdom will solve all the matter, but it has not weakened his will and energy bent towards nefarious activities. If we feel any sympathy for him in his infirmities of old age, it is counteracted by his proclivity to evil and crooked ways and means. The part he has been playing in life, is by a piece of unconscious irony, expounded by him :

With devotion's visage  
And pious action we do sugar o'er  
The devil himself.

LAERTES. ✓

Laertes takes after his father. There is his poor sister Ophelia, to whom he can preach homilies like his father; and while Ophelia is a patient and submissive listener, she manages to put in a little protest.

But, good my brother,  
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,  
Show me the steep, and thorny way to heaven,  
Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,  
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,  
And recks not his own rede.

Perhaps here is a hint of his character, Laertes is studying at Paris and to a youngman like Laertes Paris may mean a lot. That Laertes may be showing his wild cats there, does not seem to be unlikely. Hamlet spent his student days at Wittenberg: Laertes is spending his at Paris—and we ought to understand what it signified. It is a hint of dissipation. Perhaps in Ophelia's words sisterly concern, and warning—are meant to be conveyed.

But if we have any doubt about what is hinted, it is dispelled by Polonius's long, elaborate instructions to Reynolds who is being dispatched to Paris to make discreet inquiries about Laertes' way of life at Paris. Polonius might have had some report of the doings of his son at Paris, and he naturally wants to have them verified. A young man like Laertes, impulsive, passionate, sensual, is like to be corrupted in Paris; the father is aware of the danger, but he is anxious that his son should not get into a scrape in any case.

We see but little of Laertes until he returns from Paris on hearing some vague report of his father's death. He is quite wary and shrewd, and on returning from Paris, he goes about among the people, enlisting their sympathy and support for his cause, and then putting himself at their head he rushes into the presence of the King and demands satisfaction for his father's death. Thanks to the king's craftiness, he is able to conciliate Laertes and makes use of him for his own purpose. Laertes is unscrupulous like his father and readily lends himself to be used in a vile plot by the King. The King proposes the fencing match in which Laertes is to choose a shar' ppointed rapier, and Laertes proposes to tip the point with a deadly pcison. The two villains are well matched. It may

be noticed that Laertes is in the same situation as Hamlet, a murdered father to revenge, and that the difference in their character is strikingly revealed in the way each seeks revenge—Hamlet must have a public justification of his revenge (even with his dying voice he fervently wishes it, and leave it to Horatio), while Laertes seeks a private vendetta by foul and treacherous means. He meets his fate by allowing himself to be dragged in, and by his active participation in, the King's plot. Only at the last moment does he realize his own folly and crime—and recovers something of his better self.

The foul practice  
Hath turn'd itself on me, lo, here I lie,  
Never to rise again: thy mother's poison'd,  
I can no more; the king, the king's to blame;

✓ OPHELIA

Ophelia's portion in life is sad, pitifully sad. Left without a mother in a home which is no home to her. but a hell, bullied and sermonized by father and brother, she must have lived a dismal life, of which and that is the worst of it—she seems to have little consciousness. If she had a little of the spirit of revolt, and a little of love of gait (like Jessica in the *Merchant of Venice*), she might have worked out her liberation. But Ophelia is too weak, too submissive and uncomplaining to resist her fate. We can neither blame nor praise her. She seems to have no personality. She loves Hamlet; yet she cannot own it to her brother and father. And when her father bids her stop loving she, like a good daughter, readily obeys him.

Perhaps her upbringing is to blame for all this. She had been subject to coercion and repression at the hands of her father and brother—and she could have had no will or choice of her own. At the bidding of her father she renounces her love. So grievously was her self crippled by repression that she had no notion of the elementary code of honour. She consents to play the dirty role of a decoy at the suggestion of her father and the King. When Hamlet enters, she kneels at her prayer—desk. The pose is too obvious, because unsophisticated as she is, she hardly realizes that she gives the whole show away.—The nunnery scene is Hamlet's rejection of Ophelia. It may well be believed that the incestuous marriage of his mother had reacted upon his relations with



Ophelia When Hamlet cries "Frailty, thy name is woman!", Ophelia is included in that general censure. Now Ophelia's passive role to satisfy her father and to dupe Hamlet, even if she is unaware of the duplicity involved, totally disgusts him, and all that he can bid Ophelia do for her own good is to get to nunnery.

Ophelia was born to suffer for her passivity and for her innocence (which is of a negative character). Her position is of one extreme pathos. She is drawn into the web of intrigue without any choice of her own; there is something of fatalistic ring in it. She "comes between the pass and fell incensed points of mighty opposites", and is torn to pieces. Hamlet's madness (it is not clear whether she holds herself responsible for it for having repulsed his love on her father's advice) must have been a shock for her. She regards herself as "most deject and wretched" for having lost Hamlet. Then follows the tragic death of her father. It is a still greater shock to her—it is something ghastly. Both these incidents have weighed upon her spirit, and drive her mad. Perhaps she has suffered long in silence, and with little stay in power that she possesses, her reason gives way.

Mrs. Jameson thus writes of Ophelia. "Ophelia—poor Ophelia! O far too soft, too good, too fair to be cast away among the briars of this working-day world, and fall and bleed upon the thorns of life! What shall be said of her? Like a strain of sad, sweet music, which comes floating by us on the wings of night and silence and which we rather feel than hear—like the exhalation of the violet dying even upon the senses it charms—like the snowflake dissolved in air before it has caught a stain of earth—like the light surf severed from the billow which a breath disperses—such is the character of Ophelia, so exquisitely delicate, it seems as if a touch would profane it, so sanctified in our thoughts by the last and worst of human woes, that we scarcely dare to consider it too deeply. The love of Ophelia, which she never once confesses, is like a secret which we have stolen from her, and which ought to die upon our hearts as upon her own. Her sorrows ask not words but tears, and her madness has precisely the same effect that would be produced by the spectacle of real insanity, if brought before us we feel inclined to turn away, and veil our eyes in reverential pity and too painful sympathy.

Beyond every character that Shakespeare has drawn (Hamlet alone excepted) that of Ophelia makes us forget the poet in his own creation. Whenever we bring her to mind, it is with the same exclusive sense of her real existence, without reference to the wonderful power which called her into life. The effect and what an effect<sup>1)</sup> is produced by strokes, so few, and so unobtrusive, that we take no thought of them. It is so purely natural, unsophisticated, yet is profound in its pathos, that, as Hamlet observes, it takes us back to the old ballads, we forget that, in its perfect artlessness, it is the supreme and consummate triumph of art. . . .

It is the helplessness of Ophelia, arising merely from her innocence, and pictured without an indication of weakness which melt us with such profound pity. She is so young, that neither her mind nor her person has attained maturity, she is not aware of the nature of her feelings, they are prematurely developed in their full force before she has strength to bear them, and love and grief together rend and shatter the frail texture of her existence like the burning fluid poured into a crystal vase. She says very little, and what she does say seems rather intended to hide than to reveal the emotions of her heart, yet in these few words we are made as perfectly acquainted with her character, and with what is passing in her mind, as if she had thrown forth her soul with all the glowing eloquence of Juliet."

#### HORATIO

Hamlet seems to have taken very kindly to Horatio and we see Horatio through Hamlet's eyes. Horatio is little involved in the action of the play, he is kept a little aloof and has little to do with the action except his association with Hamlet. Hamlet seems to have needed him most; he should have somebody to whom he could open his mind; later Hamlet shares his confidence with him. He is a scholar and has been together with Hamlet at the University of Wittenberg. Hamlet admires him most, and Horatio embodies the stoic ideal—and therefore a balanced will and disposition. Hamlet says that Horatio is one who, in suffering all suffers nothing. It means that Horatio is indifferent to the smile or frown of fortune. We do not know whether, as some critics suppose, Horatio is a man of action as contrasted with Hamlet who is supposed to be a man of thought. We do not

believe in the separation of thought and action; there can be no action without thought.

Hamlet admires Horatio because judgment and passion are happily balanced in him. Hamlet says -

Bless'd are those

Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,

That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger,

To sound what stop she please.

After all Horatio is not a "passion's slave". Both Horatio and Hamlet are scholars, and both may have the same temperament. Hamlet sees in Horatio a nearer approximation to his own ideal in life. Hamlet seems to lack a balanced will and temper, and has instead a high strung sensibility, but both have the same speculative interest in the things of life.

### ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

Hamlet had known Rosencrantz and Guildenstern before, and he would have cordially welcomed them at Elsinore, but he is quick enough to see that they are the agents of the King, and are here to pump him, and earn their hire. His attitude of friendship towards them changes at once, and he seeks to keep them at distance, but their business draws them to Hamlet, and Hamlet has to bear their company and do, all he can to avoid them by his mocking, mystical tone

Hamlet aptly compares them to sponges, as their business is, as Hamlet implies to suck all information out of him. But Hamlet is more than a match for them. Guildenstern talks to the King that Hamlet puts them off with a crafty madness when any attempt is made to bring him on to some confession of his own trouble.

Hamlet makes no secret of what they are after, but is very blunt with them. "You would play upon me; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you will sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass, and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet you cannot make it speak! 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me."

Hamlet knows that they are the basest tools of the King. As Hamlet says, these creatures "soak up the King's countenance, his rewards, his authorities", the King "keeps them,

like an ape, in the corner of his jaw : first mouthed to be last  
swallowed".

When Hamlet is shipped off to England with these two fellows, he knows that some mischief is on. He can trust his two school fellows as he might trust "adders fang'd". And Hamlet is able to outmanoeuvre the King and his two agents. While his own death has been planned by the King, he manages to send these two fellows to death; and he takes pleasure in it.

For tis sport to have the enginer,  
Hoist with his own petar , and't shall go hard  
But I will delve one yard below their mines  
And blow them at the moon.

#### CRITICAL EXTRACTS TENNYSON

Hamlet is the greatest creature in literature that I know  
of though there may be elsewhere finer scenes and passages  
of poetry. Ugolino and Paolo and Francesca in Dante equal anything anywhere. It is said that Shakespeare was such a poor actor that he never got beyond his Ghost in this play, but then the ghost is the most real ghost that ever was. The Queen did not think that Ophelia committed suicide, neither I do".

#### WEISS

It is noteworthy how Shakespeare defends Ophelia from our censure while she is chanting those free duties of an olden time. We listen to them in company with the pitying king and queen. the air seems to gather pity to tone the rude surprise. She was naturally full of sensibility, so, when she enters in the first mad scene, entirely insensible to her misfortune it both increases our sadness and calls upon us to create what should be her sane feeling. When that is done, the songs borrow all the chasteness of misfortune. We are absorbed in sorrow to see how distraction could violate his secret privacy, thinking more of that than of the words, the coarseness eludes us. We are still bound up in the brother's feeling at this sight, who cries :

.. . ..O rose of May'  
Dear maid, Kind sister, Sweet Ophelia !

And the King says, "How do you, pretty lady?" Yes, that she is, through it all. If she had her wits, and were using them to persuade to revenge her, it could not move like these piteous, tender improprieties.

Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself  
She turns to favour and to prettiness

If she sings without smirching a single petal of the daisies and pausies, which she so softly distributes, with such an appeal to forlornness, to bid their fragrance to disinfect her language or to speak for her in the natural key of her wonted maidenhood, she would not arouse our pity so much. So every heart exhales in the pity that plays the magic of distance and softens the unsightliness of her ruin.

Shakespeare has given most touchingly rational applications to her distribution of the flowers. The flowers themselves are called in fancy, she holds no actual nosegay in her hand. She recalls, together with the long unheeded songs, all that she learnt in her girlhood about the symbolic meanings of flowers, and a light irony invests some of them, it is plain that the rosemary, for remembrance, is ideally bestowed upon Laertes, with pausies too: "A document in madness; thoughts and remembrance fitted." Rosemary was supposed to have the quality of strengthening the memory. The volatile Laertes will have need of it, and of as many thoughts as he can muster. The fennel ought to be handed Horatio and the columbines should be intended for the King; the one is a symbol of flattery and is exchanged among courtiers, but Horatio never learned the useful trade, the others are expressive of ingratitude and cuckoldom. Was Hamlet's father slain because of that? The columbines were earned betimes. There's rue for the Queen, for she has need of repentance. There's rue for herself too. Both need it, but the Queen with a difference, as her moral condition differed from Ophelia. We may call it an herb that leads to grace. There is a daisy. She recognizes it, but ought not to keep it for herself. And there is no other maiden present. It represents frivolous and lightthoughted girls. She would give Laertes some violets, if they had not all withered when his father died. These delicate allusions make us think that before the distraction set in Ophelia had inklings of

the foul concerns around her. All the more hopeless, then, became the overthrow of reason."

### HERFORD

The apparition of a ghost seeking vengeance upon his murderer was the popular sensation . . . . Long before Shakespeare took up the story of *Hamlet*, the ghost of the murdered king of Denmark had strutted upon rude Elizabethan stages, calling out in pitiful accounts ("like an oyster-wife") "*Hamlet, revenge!*" The story as we found it, was the most effective stage-subject ever discovered by the Elizabethans, a strategic duel between two men, one of whom knows the other's secret guilt, but is completely in his power, while the other suspects that he knows it, but dare not openly strike him down. It is the situation of Falkland and the hero in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*. The king's strategy lay in successive attempts to make Hamlet show his hand, Hamlet's in parrying these attempts. All this Shakespeare took over; in the latest form of the play as in the earliest. Ophelia, Polonius, Gertrude (under these or other names are successively foiled by the astuteness of Hamlet. These powerful stage situations lost nothing in his hands. But the deeper interest of the story for him did not lie in intrigue or counter-intrigue. It was not Hamlet's success that chiefly engaged him. Hamlet, like Brutus, is an idealist, keenly conscious of the dissonance of what should be and what is. But what is wrong with the world, in his eyes, is no mere form of government, actual or impending. He sees evils rampant or insidious everywhere, the world is an unweeded garden that runs to seed, possessed by things rank and gross in nature merely. Far from imagining like Brutus, that he can save the situation by a stroke of the sword, he is the victim of a despondency which paralysed his will, and were it not for his honest friend Horatio, and the memory of his father, it would have sapped his faith in the very possibility of goodness. This despondency was not inborn in Hamlet, and we have glimpses of lyric joy in the glory of the Earth and of Man (II ii.). But the disposition to it was in born, and when his beloved father suddenly and mysteriously dies, and his mother becomes the incestuous wife of his uncle, the glory is quenched for him, man becomes "a quintessence of dust", and all things in life seem stale, flat and unprofitable."

## HAZLITT

"Hamlet is a name, his speeches and sayings but the idle coinage of the poet's brain. What, then, are they not real? They are as real as our own thoughts. Their reality is in the reader's mind. It is we who are Hamlet. The play has a prophetic truth, which is above that of history. Whoever has become thoughtful or melancholy through his own mishaps or those of others, whoever has borne about with him the clouded brow of reflection, and thought himself "too much in the sun", whoever has seen the golden lamp of day dimmed by envious mists rising in his own breast, and could find in the world before him only a dull blank with nothing left remarkable in it; whoever has known "the pangs of depised love, the insolence of office or the spurns which patient merit of unworthy takes", he who has felt his mind sink within him, and sadness cling to his heart like a malady, who has had his hope blighted and his youth staggered by the apparitions of strange things, who cannot be well at ease, while he sees evil hovering near him like a spectre, whose powers of action have been eaten up by thought, he to whom the universe seems infinite, and himself nothing; whose bitterness of soul makes him careless of consequences, who goes to a play as his best resource to shove off, to a second remove, the evils of life by mock representations of them—this is the true Hamlet."

## DOWDEN

"When *Hamlet* was written, Shakespeare had passed through the years of apprenticeship, and become a master-dramatist. In point of style the play stands midway between his early and latest works. The studious superintendence of the poet over the development of his thought and his imaginings, very apparent in Shakespeare's early writings, now conceals itself. But the action of imagination—and thought has not yet become embarrassing in its swiftness and multiplicity of direction. Rapid dialogue in verse, admirable for its combination of verisimilitude with artistic metrical effects, occurs in the scene in which Hamlet questions his friend respecting the appearance of the Ghost (i 2); the soliloquies of Hamlet are examples of the slow, dwelling

verse which Shakespeare appropriates to the utterance of thought in solitude, and nowhere did Shakespeare write a nobler piece of prose than the speech in which Hamlet describes to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern his melancholy. But such particulars as these do not constitute the chief evidence which proves that the poet had now attained maturity. The mystery, the baffling, vital obtrudes of the play, and in particular of the character of its chief person, make it evident that Shakespeare had left far behind him that early stage of development when an artist obtrudes his intentions, or distrusting his own ability to keep sight of one uniform design, deliberately and with effort holds that design persistently before him. When Shakespeare completed *Hamlet*, he must have trusted himself and trusted his audience, he trusts himself to enter into relation with his subject, highly complex as the subject was, in a pure, emotional manner. *Hamlet* might so easily have been manufactured into an enigma, or a puzzle and then the puzzle, if such pains were bestowed, could be completely taken to pieces and explained. But Shakespeare created it a mystery, therefore it is for ever suggestive; for ever suggestive, and never wholly explicable".

#### VERPLANCK

"While every other character in this play, Ophelia, Polonius, and even Osrick, has been analysed and discussed, it is remarkable that no critic has stepped forward to notice the great beauty of Horatio's character, and its exquisite adaptation to the effect of the piece. He is a character of great excellence and accomplishment, but while this is distinctly shown, it is but sketched, not elaborately painted. His qualities are brought out only by single and seemingly accidental touches; the whole being toned down to an unobtrusive beauty that does not tempt the mind to wander from the interest, which rests alone upon Hamlet, while it is yet distinct enough to increase that interest, by showing him worthy to be Hamlet's trusted friend in life and the chosen defender of his honour after his death. Such a character, in the hands of another author, would have been made the centre of some secondary plot. But here, while he commands our respect and esteem, he never for a moment divides a passing interest with the Prince. He does not break in upon the main current



of our feelings. He contributes only to the general effect; so that it requires an effort of the mind to separate him for critical admiration".

### RALEIGH

The character of Hamlet has been many times discussed, and the opinions expressed may, for the most part be arranged in two opposing camps. Some critics have held with Goethe Coleridge, that Hamlet is Shakespeare's study of the impractical temperament, the portrait of a dreamer. Others denying this have called attention to his extraordinary courage and promptitude in action. He follows the Ghost without a moment's misgiving, in spite of his companions' warnings. He kills Polonius out of hand, and, when he finds his mistake brushes it aside like a fly, to return to the main business. He sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their death with cool despatch and gives them a hasty epitaph.

'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes  
Between the pass and fell incensed points  
Of mighty opposites

In the sea fight, we are told, he was the first to board the pirate vessel. And nothing in speech could be more pointed, practical and searching, than his rapid cross examination of Horatio concerning the appearance of the ghost. Some of those who lay stress on these things go further, and maintain that Hamlet succeeds, in his designs. His business was to convince himself of the King's guilt, and to make open demonstration of it before all Denmark. When these things are done, he stabs the King, and though his own life is taken by treachery his task is accomplished, now that the story of the murder cannot be buried in his grave.

Yet when we read this or any other summary of the events narrated, we feel that it takes us far from the theme of the play. A play is not a collection of the biographies of those who appear in it. It is grouping of certain facts and events round a single centre, so that they may be seen at a glance. In this play that centre is the mind of Hamlet. We see with his eyes, and think his thoughts. When once we are caught in the rush of events we judge him no more than we judge ourselves. Almost all that has ever been said about his character is true, his character is so live and versatile

that it presents many aspects. What is untrue is the common assumption that his character is the chief cause of the dramatic situation, and that Shakespeare intends us to judge it by the events—that, the play, in short, is a Moral Play, like one of Miss Edgeworth's stories. A curiously business-like vein of criticism runs through essays and remarks on Hamlet. There is much talk of failure and success. A ghost has told him to avenge the murder of his father, why does he not do his obvious duty, and do it at once, so that everything may put in order? His delay, it has sometimes been replied is justified by his desire to do his duty in a more effective and workmanlike fashion. The melancholy prince has certainly not been able to infect all who read his story with his own habit of thought. If the government of the State of Denmark were one of the issues of the play, there would be a better foothold for these practical moralists. But the State of Denmark is not regarded at all, except as is a topical and picturesque setting for the main interest. The tragedy is a tragedy of private life, made conspicuous by the royal station of the chief actors in it. Before the play opens the deeds which make the tragedy inevitable have been already done. They are revealed to us only as they are revealed to Hamlet. His mother's faithlessness has given him cause for deep unrest and melancholy; he distrusts human nature and longs for death. Then the murder is made known to him. He sees the reality beneath the plausible face of things, and thenceforth the Court of Elsinore becomes for him a theatre where all the powers of the universe are contending.

"O all you host of Heaven . O Earth, What else ?  
And shall I couple Hell ? O fie ! hold my heart ;  
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old  
But bear me stiffly up".

It is no wonder that his friends and companions think him mad, he has seen and known what they cannot see and know and a barrier has risen between him and them.

"I hold it fit that we shake hands and part ;  
You, as your business and desires shall point you ;  
For everyman has business and desire,  
Such as it is, and for my own poor part,  
Look you, I will go pray "

The world has become a mockery under the glare of a single fact. The idea of his mother's perfidy colours all his words and thoughts. The very word "mother" is turned into a name of evil note, "O wonderful" that can so astonish a mother". So also in *Troilus and Cressida* the springs of humanity are poisoned for Troilus by the falseness of Cressida. "Think we had mothers". The slower imagination of Ulysses cannot follow the speed of this argument. When he asks, "What hath she done, Prince, that she can soil our mothers?" Troilus replies with all the condensed irony of Hamlet, "Nothing at all, unless that this were she". To Hamlet, in the bitterness of his discovery, the love of Ophelia is a snare, yet there is a tragic touch of gentleness in parting with her. The waters of destruction are out, she may escape them, if she will. She is innocent as yet, why should she be breeder of sinners? Let her flee from the wrath to come—"To a nunnery, go!" It is observed by Coleridge that in Hamlet the equilibrium between the real and the imaginary world is disturbed. Just such a disturbance, so to call it, is produced by any great shock given to feeling, by bereavement or crime breaking in upon the walled serenity of daily life—and opening vistas into the infinite expanse, where only the imagination can travel. The horizon is widened far beyond the narrow range of possible action. The old woes of the world are revived, and pass like shadows before the spell bound watcher. What Hamlet does is of little importance, nothing that he can do would avert the tragedy, or lessen his own agony. It is not by what he does that he appeals to us but by what he sees and feels. Those who see less think him mad. But the King who in a different manner, has access too what is passing in Hamlet's mind, knows that he is dangerously sane.

The case of Hamlet well illustrates that old fashioned psychology which divided the mind of men into active and intellectual powers. Everyone who has ever felt the stress of sudden danger must be familiar with the refusal of the intellect to subordinate itself wholly to the will. Even a drowning man, if report be true, often finds his mind at leisure, as though he were contemplating his own struggle from a distance. Action and contemplation are usually separated in the drama, for the sake of clearness, and are

embodied in different persons. But they are not separated in life, nor in the character of Hamlet. His actions surprise himself. His reason, being Shakespeare's reason, is superb, in its outlook, and sits unmoved above the strife. Thus while all that he says is characteristic of him, some of it is whimsical, impulsive individual, a part of the action of the play, while others of his sayings seem to express the mind that he shares with his creator, and to anticipate the reflections of an on looker.

It is not from the weakness of indcision that Hamlet so often pays tribute to the forces which lie beyond a man's control. Of what he does rashly he says :

"And praised be rashness for it, let us know  
Our indiscretion sometimes serves so well,  
When our dear plots do pall; and that should teach us,  
There's a Divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will".

When Horatio tries to dissuade him from the fencing match, he replies, "Not a whit, we defy angury, there's a special Providence in the fall of a sparrow. "In these comments he speaks the mind of the dramatist. A profound sense of fate underlies all Shakespeare's tragedies. Sometimes he permits his characters, Romeo or Hamlet, to give utterance to it, sometimes he prefers a subtler and more ironical method of exposition. Iago and Edmund, alone among the persons of the great tragedies, believe in the sufficiency of man to control his destinies. "Virtue a fig!" says Iago, "It is in ourselves that we are thus or thus" It is "the excellent foppery of the world", says Edmund, that "we make guilty of our disaster the sun, the moon and the stars" The event is Shakespeare's own reply to those two calculators. His criticism is contained in the event which often gives a thrill of new meaning to the speeches of unconscious agents. This classical irony, as it is called, which plays with the ignorance of man, and makes him a prophet in spite of himself, is an essential part of Shakespeare's method".

#### LONDON QUARTERLY REVIEW ? VOL XXIX

"The Universality of Shakespeare's genius is in some sort reflected in Hamlet. He has a mind wise and witty,

abstract and practical, the utmost penetrating sagacity in the affairs of life, playful jest, biting satire, sparkling repartee, with the darkest and deepest thoughts that can agitate man. He exercises all his various faculties with surprising readiness. He passes without an effort "from grave to gay, from lively to severe" from his everyday character to personated lunacy. He divines, with the rapidity of lightning, the nature and motives of those who are brought into contact with him, fits in a moment his bearing and retorts to their individual peculiarities. He is equally at home whether he is mocking Polonius with hidden raillery, or dissipating Ophelia's dream of love or crushing the sponges with sarcasm and invective, or talking euphuism with Othello, and satirizing while he talks it; whether he is uttering wise maxims or welcoming the players with facetious graciousness, probing the inmost soul of others, or sounding the mysteries of his own. His philosophy stands out conspicuous among the brilliant faculties which contend for the mastery. It is the quality which gives weight and dignity to the rest. It intermingles with all his actions. He traces the most trifling incidents up to their general laws. His natural disposition is to lose himself in contemplation. He goes thinking out of the world. The commonest ideas that pass through his mind are invested with a wonderful freshness and originality. His meditations in the churchyard are on the trite notion that all ambition leads but to the grave. But what condensation, what variety, what picture isqueness, what intense unmitigated gloom! It is the finest sermon that was ever preached against the vanities of life".

#### VERY (ESSAYS AND POEMS)

"However strong the sense of continued life such a mind as his (Shakespeare's) may have had, it could not have reached that assurance of eternal existence which Christ alone can give—which alone robs the grave of victory, and takes from death its sting. Hence lie the materials out of which this remarkable tragedy was built up. From the wrestling of his own soul with the great enemy, comes that depth and mystery which startles us in Hamlet.

It is to this condition that Hamlet has been reduced. This is the low portal of grief to which we must stoop, before we can enter the heaven pointing pile that the post has raised t

his memory. Stunned by the sudden storm of woes, he doubts, as he looks at the havoc spread around him, whether he himself is left, and fears lest the very ground on which he lies prostrate may not prove treacherous. Stripped of all else, he is sensible on this point alone. Here is the life from which all else grows. Interested in the glare of prosperity around him, only because he lives, he is ever-turning his eyes from it to the desolation in which he himself stands. His glance ever descends from the lofty pinnacle of pride and false security to the rotten foundation—and tears follow smiles. He raised his eyes to heaven and "This brave o'erhanging firmament" seems to him but "a pestilent congregation of vapours" and its descends to earth, and its "goodly frame seemed . . . a sterile promontory." He fixes it on man, and his noble apostrophe—"What a piece of work is man! how noble is reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!"—is followed fast upon by the sad confession "And yet . . . man delights not me; nay, nor woman neither." He does not, as we say, "get accustomed to his situation. He holds fast by the wisdom of affliction and will not let her go. He would keep her, for she is his life. The storm has descended, and all has been away but the rock. To this he clings for safety. He will not return, like the dog to his vomit. He will not render unavailing the lessons of Providence by "getting accustomed" to feed on that which is not bread, on which to live is death. He fears nothing save the loss of existence. But this thought thunders at the very base of the cliff on which shipwrecked of every other hold, he had been thrown. That which to everybody else seems common, presses upon him with an all-absorbing interest, he struggles with the mystery of his own being, the root of all other mysteries, until it has become an overmastering element before which all others yield and seem as nothing.

This is the hinge on which his every endeavour turns. Such a thought as this might well prove more than an equal counterpoise to any incentive to what we call action. The obscurity which lies over these depths of Hamlet's character arises from this unique position in which the poet exhibits him, a position which opens to us the basis of Shakespeare's own being, and which, though dimly visible to all, is ye



real and the imaginary worlds. In Hamlet this balance is disturbed his thoughts and the images of his fancy are far more vivid than his actual perceptions, and his very perceptions, instantly passing through the *medium* of his contemplations, acquire, as they pass, a form not naturally their own. Hence we see a great, an almost enormous intellectual activity, and a proportionate aversion to real action, consequent upon it with all its symptoms and accompanying qualities. This character Shakespeare plans in circumstances, under which it is obliged to act on the spur of the moment—Hamlet is brave and careless of death, but he vacillates from sensibility, and procrastinates from thought, and loses the power of action in the energy of resolve ..

The effect of this overbalance of the imaginative power is beautifully illustrated in the ever lasting broodings and superfluous activities of Hamlet's mind which unseated from its healthy relation, is constantly occupied with the world within, and abstracted from the world without, giving substance to shadows, and throwing a mist over all commonplace actualities. It is the nature of thought to be indefinite—definiteness belongs to external imagery alone. Hence it is that the sense of sublimity arises, not from the sight of an outward object, but from the beholder's reflection upon it; not from the sensuous impression, but from the imaginative reflex. Few have seen a celebrated waterfall without feeling something akin to disappointment; it is only subsequently that the image comes back full into the mind, and brings with it a train of grand or beautiful associations. Hamlet feels this, his senses are in a trance, and he looks upon external things as hieroglyphies".





## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark.

HAMLET, Son to the late, and Nephew to the present, King

FORTINBRAS, Prince of Norway.

HORATIO, Friend to Hamlet.

OLONIUS, Principal Secretary of State.

LAFFRÈS, his Son.

VOLTIMAND } Ambassadors to Norway.  
CORNELIUS }

ROSENCRANTZ } formerly Fellow Students with Hamlet  
GUILDENSTERN }

OSRIC, a Fop.

A Gentleman.

A Priest.

MARCELLUS } Officers  
BERNARDO }

FRANCISCO, a soldier

REYNALDO, Servant to Polonius

A Captain.

English Ambassadors.

Players. Two Clowns, Grave diggers

GERTRUDE, Queen of Denmark and Mother to Hamlet

OPHELIA, Daughter to Polonius

Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Sailors, Messengers, and

Attendants. Ghost of Hamlet's Father.

SONG. *Elsinore.*

HAMLET  
PRINCE OF DENMARK  
ACT I

*Scene I. EL SINORE A PLATFORM BEFORE THE CASTLE*

FRANCISCO at his post Enter to him BERNARDO.

Bernardo. Who's there?

Francisco. Nay, answer me. Stand and <sup>declare</sup> unfold yourself

Bernardo. Long live the king!

Francisco. Bernardo?

Bernardo. He. <sup>punctual</sup> 5

Francisco. You come most carefully upon your hour.

Bernardo. 'Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed

Francisco.

Francisco. For this relief much thanks, 'tis bitter cold,  
And I am sick at heart <sup>I am quite fed up</sup>

Bernardo. Have you had quiet guard?

Francisco. Not a mouse stirring. 10

Bernardo. Well, good night.

If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,

The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.

Francisco. I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who is there?

*Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS.*

Horatio. Friends to this ground <sup>loyal</sup> Country

Marcellus. And liegemen to the Dane. 15

Francisco. Give you good-night.

Marcellus. O! farewell, honest soldier:

Who hath relief'd you?

Francisco. Bernardo has my place.

Give you good-night [Exit.

Marcellus. Holla! Bernardo!

Bernardo. Say,

What! is Horatio there? <sup>It is his self.</sup>

Horatio. A piece of him. 19

Bernardo. Welcome, Horatio, welcome, good Marcellus.

## PARAPHRASE

## ACT I

*Scene I. EL SINORE, A PLATFORM BEFORE THE CASTLE.*

*FRANCISCO at his post. Enter to him BERNARDO.*

*Bernardo.* Who is there ?

*Francisco.* First give me the answer ; stand and declare yourself.

*Bernardo.* Long live the king !

*Francisco.* Are you Bernardo ?

*Bernardo.* Yes, it is Bernardo.

*Francisco.* You come to the exact point of time.

*Bernardo.* It has now struck twelve ; it is time for you to go to bed, Francisco.

*Francisco.* Much thanks for relieving me. It is bitterly cold, and I am quite fed up.

*Bernardo.* Did anything disturb you in your watch ?

*Francisco.* I did not hear a mouse moving.

*Bernardo.* Well, good night. If you meet Horatio and Marcellus, who are partners of my watch, tell them to hurry.

*Francisco.* I think I hear them coming. Stand - - - there ?

*Enter HORATIO, and MARCELLUS.*

*Horatio.* We are friends of this country.

*Marcellus.* And we are subjects to the king of Denmark.

*Francisco.* Let me say good night to you.

(Page 2 Lines 1—16)

*Marcellus.* Farewell, good soldier. Who has taken your place ?

*Francisco.* Bernardo has succeeded me. Good night to you. [Exit.

*Marcellus.* Ho-Bernardo !

*Bernardo.* Are you Horatio, there ?

*Horatio.* Yes, it is his self.

*Bernardo.* You are welcome, Horatio ; you are welcome, Marcellus.

*Ghost*

Horatio What 'has this thing appear'd again to night

Bernardo I have seen nothing.

Marcellus Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,

And will not let belief take hold of him

Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us .

25

Therefore I have entreated him along *request*

With us to watch the minutes of this night ,

That if again this apparition come,

He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

*Horatio* Tush, tush ! 'twill not appear.

*Bernardo.* *pour in* sit down awhile, 30

And let us once again assail your ears.

That are so fortified against our story,

What we two nights have seen.

*Horatio.*

Well, sit we down,

And let us hear Bernardo speak of this

*Bernardo* Last night of all,

When yond same star that's westward from the pole *35*

Had made his course to illumine that part of heaven

Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,

The bell then beating one,—

*Enter ghost.*

*Marcellus* Peace ! break thee off ; look, where it comes  
again !

*Bernardo.* In the same figure like the king that's  
dead 41

*Marcellus.* Thou art a scholar, speak to it, Horatio

*Bernardo.* Looks it not like the king ? mark it, Horatio

*Horatio* Most like : it harrows me with fear and  
wonder

*Bernardo* It would be *troubles*  
spoke to

*Marcellus*

Question it, Horatio. 45

*Horatio* What art thou that usurp'st this time of  
night,

Together with that fair and war like form  
In which the majesty of buried Denmark

Did sometimes march ? by heaven ! I charge thee, speak !

*Marcellus* May I ask whether the spirit appeared again to-night.

*Bernardo* I have seen nothing.

*Marcellus.* Horatio says that it is a trick played upon us by our imagination, and refuses to believe all that we say about this apparition, dreaded by us, and seen by us twice. Therefore I have requested him to come along and watch with us as the night slowly moves so that if again the apparition comes, he may confirm the evidence of our eyes and address it.

*Horatio.* Nonsense. It will not appear.

*Bernardo* Sit down for the present and let us once again try to persuade you, when you are so obstinately incredulous, to believe what we have seen for two nights.

*Horatio.* Well, let us sit down and hear what *Bernardo* has got to say.

*Bernardo.* Particularly last night when yonder star which appears west from the polar star, had moved to that part of the sky where it now blazes, *Marcellus* and myself, the bell then striking one. (Page 4, Lines 17—39)

*Marcellus* Silence let us stop. Look where it comes again !

*Enter GHOST*

*Bernardo* It is the exact image of the king who is dead.

*Marcellus.* You are a scholar, speak to it, *Horatio*.

*Bernardo.* Does it not look like the king? Observe it, *Horatio*

*Horatio* It is most like the king. It confounds me with fear and amazement.

*Bernardo.* It should be addressed

*Marcellus* Speak to it, *Horatio*.

*Horatio* I challenge you who walk at this late hour of night in that excellent and martial pose in which the late king of Denmark sometimes marched Who are you? I implore you, speak.

*Marcellus* It is offended

*Bernardo* See! it stalks away. 50

*Horatio* Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee speak!

[*Exit ghost.*]

*Marcellus.* 'Tis gone, and will not answer.

*Bernardo* How now, *Horatio*! you tremble and look pale

Is not this something more than fantasy?

What think you on 't? 55

*Horatio* Before my God, I might not this believe  
Without the sensible and true avouch  
Of mine own eyes

*Marcellus.* Is it not like the king?

*Horatio.* As thou art to thyself 60  
She was the very armour he had on

When he the ambitious Norway combated;

So frown'd he once, when in an angry parle

He smote the sledged Polacks on the ice

'Tis strange.

*Marcellus* Thus twice before, and <sup>again</sup> jump at this dead 65  
hour,

With martial stalk <sup>had pass'd</sup> hath he gone by our watch

*Horatio* In what particular thought to work I know  
not, <sup>plain sense</sup>

But, in the gross and scope of my opinion,

This bodes some strange eruption to our state.<sup>c</sup>

*Marcellus* Good now, sit down, and tell me, he that 70  
knows,

Why this same strict and most observant w

So nightly toils the subject of the land,

And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,

And foreign mart for imp'ements of war;

Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task<sup>h</sup>

Does not divide the Sunday from the week;

What might be toward, that this sweaty haste

Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day:

Who is't that can inform me?

*Marcellus.* It is offended.

*Bernardo.* See how it proudly walks away.

*Horatio* Stay ! speak ! I implore you, speak !

[*Exit* GHOST.]

*Marcellus* It is gone, and will not answer your challenge.

*Bernardo.* You disbelieved us, Horatio ; now you tremble with fear, and look pale. Is it not something more than our imagination ? What is your opinion of it ?

*Horatio.* I swear by my God I could not have believed this before I had seen it with my own eyes.

*Marcellus.* Is it not like the king ?

*Horatio.* As you are like yourself. It was the very armour the king had on when he encountered the ambitious king of Norway ; so did he frown once when in an angry dispute he struck down the Poles who drive in sledges on the ice. It is marvellous.

*Marcellus.* Thus twice before and exactly at midnight he had passed with war-like steps by our post

*Horatio* I cannot imagine what particular intention can make it walk. But my plain sense says that it portends some calamity to our dominion.

*Marcellus.* Well, let us sit down now, and let anybody who knows, tell me why so strict vigilance keeps the citizens busy at night, why so many cannon are every day manufactured, and materials of war purchased from foreign markets, why ship-builders are enforced to work all the days of the week, not excepting Sunday ; what all this preparation is for, that all the expedition and toil, employed in the task, are continued day and night. Can any one tell me what all this means.



- Horatio* That can I ;  
 At least, the whisper goes so Our last king, 80  
 Whose image even but now appear'd to us,  
 Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway  
 Thereto prick'd on by a most emulate pride,  
 Bar'd to the combat, in which our valiant Hamlet  
 For so this side of our known world esteem'd him — 85  
 Did slay this Fortinbras ; who by a seal'd compact,  
 Well ratified by law and heraldry, *Chivalry*  
 Did forfeit with his life, all those his lands  
 Which he stood seiz'd of, to the conqueror ;  
 Against the which, a moiety competent *one* 90  
 Was gaged by our king, which had return'd  
 To the inheritance of Fortinbras,  
 Had he been vanquisher, as, by the same covenant,  
 And carriage of the article design'd, ~~which~~  
 His fell to Hamlet Now, sir, young Fortinbras, 95  
 Of unimproved mettle hot and full, *Quality of*  
 Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there  
 Shark'd up a list of lawless resolutes *called*  
 For food and diet to some enterprise  
 That hath a stomach in 't, which is no other  
 As it doth well appear unto our state—  
 But to recover of us, by strong hand  
 And terms compulsory, those foresaid lands  
 So by his father lost And this, I take it,  
 Is the main motive of our preparations, 105  
 The source of this our watch and the chief head aim  
 Of this post haste and romage in the land  
~~Clayton~~ *Bernardo* I think it be no other but *as you*  
 Well may it sort that this portentous figure *for*  
 Comes armed through our watch, so like the king 110  
 That was and is the question of these wars  
*Horatio* A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.  
 In the most high and palmy state of Rome,  
 A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,  
 The graves stood tenantless, and sheeted dead 115  
 The graves *emptied their inmates*

*Horatio*, I can tell you something ; at least I can tell you what the report is. Our late king, whose figure a moment ago appeared to us was, as you are aware, challenged to battle by Fortinbras of Norway, who was moved to this course of action by pride and rivalry. In this battle our brave Hamlet for so he is regarded in Denmark—killed Fortinbras, who, in terms of an agreement that was agreed upon, and confirmed by law and honour, lost, with his life, all lands which he possessed to the conqueror ; now against his possessions an equal measure of land was staked by our king, which would have gone to the possession of Fortinbras if he had been the conqueror,

(Page 6 Lines 65—93)

as by the same agreement and sense of the clause determined, his lands came to the possession of Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras, impulsive and passionate, and having little experience or knowledge, has collected a company of unruly, desperate fellows in the outlying parts of Norway, on the promise of food for some enterprise that needs courage. And this enterprise is none other—as it is evident to us—than to recover from us, by force and violence, those lands forfeited by his father. This, I understand, is the principal motive of our war-like preparations, the cause of our constant vigilance, and of all our hurry and bustle in Denmark.

*Bernardo*. Let me hope that this is the right cause. Well may it square with this that foreboding apparition comes armed when we watch—so like the king who was, and who is the cause of these wars.

*Horatio*. The apparition may trouble the mind as a particle of dust may pain the eye. In the most prosperous days of Rome a little before Julius Caesar fell, the graves emptied their inmates, and the ghosts, wrapped in white cloth, screamed in the Roman streets, and other phenomena that accompanied his fall were comets, blood-red dews, spots on the sun, and the moon which governs the tides of the sea, looked van and dismal with eclipse as if the last day of Judgment were come.

*as he would have*

(Page 8 Lines 94—120)

*atypē of sound*

Did sneak and gibber in the Roman streets,  
 As stars with trains of fire and daws of blood,  
 Disasters in the sun, and the moist star-moon  
 Upon whose influence Neptune's empire sta<sup>l</sup> ' 120  
 Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse,  
 And even the like precursor of fierce events,  
 As harbingers preceding still the fates  
 And prologue to the omen coming on, *with*  
 Have heaven and earth together demonstrated  
 Unto our climatures and countrymen— 125

*since* Country Re-enter GHOST

But, soft! behold! ho! where it comes again!  
 I'll cross it, though it blast me Stay, illusion!  
 If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,  
 Speak to me  
 If there be any good thing to be done, 130  
 That may to thee do ease and grace to me,  
 Speak to me.  
 If thou art privy to thy country's fate,  
 Which, happily, foreknowing may avoic  
 O! speak! *perhaps* 135  
 Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life  
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,  
 For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death.  
 Speak of it stay, and speak! [*Cock crows.*] Stop it,  
 Marcellus.

Marcellus. Shall I strike at it with my partisan? 140

Horatio Do, if it will not stand.

Bernardo 'Tis here!

Horatio 'Tis here! [*Exit ghosts*]

Marcellus. 'Tis gone!

We do it wrong being so majestical,  
 To offer it the show of violence;  
 For it is, as the air, invulnerable, *undebatable*  
 And our vain blows malicious mockery. *desire to tease* 145  
 Bernardo. It was about to speak when the cock crew.  
 Horatio And then it started like a guilty thing

And even similar portents of violence and destruction, as foretelling our fate and the evil to happen, have heaven and earth manifested to our country and country men. But, hush, there it comes again !

*Renter* GHOST.

I will encounter it, though it may shrivel me up (with its evil influence). Stay, apparition ! if you can use your tongue, speak to me. If anything can be done that may bring peace to you and mercy to me, speak. If you know anything of the country's fate which may be avoided by foreknowledge, speak. If you buried treasure, ill-gotten, and accumulated in your life, in the bowels of the earth, for which, people say, spirits often walk the earth, [*Cock crows*,

then speak. Stay, speak, stop !, *Marcellus*.

*Marcellus* Shall I strike it with my spear ?

*Horatio*. Do, if it will not stop.

*Bernardo*. It is here !

*Horatio*. It is here !

(*Exit* GHOST)

*Marcellus* It is gone. We have offended it by being so pompous as to offer violence to it. Like the air it is unsubstantial, and incapable of being struck. And our blows will have no effect upon it, and will be beating the air.

*Bernardo*. It was about to speak when the cock crowed.

(Page 10. Lines 121—147)

*Horatio* And then it moved away as a guilty creature on hearing a summons which is dreaded. I have heard that the cock, who is the herald of the dawn, awakens the god of the day with his loud and shrill cry ; and at this cry which is a warning to wandering spirits, whether inhabiting sea, or fire, or earth or air, they hurry back to their prison-houses (graves). The action of the ghost now proves the truth of this.

Upon a fearful summons I have heard,  
 The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,  
 150 Doth with his lofty and shrill sounding throat  
 Awake the god of day, and at his warning  
 Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,  
 Th' extravagant and erring spirit hies  
 To his confine, and of the truth herein  
 This present object made probation ~~proof~~

*Marcellus* It faded on the crowing of the cock.  
 Some say that ever 'gainst that reason comes  
 Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
 The bard of dawning singeth all night long;  
 160 All then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad;  
 The nights are wholesome, then no palmets strike,  
 No fairy take, nor witch hath power to charm,  
 So hallow'd and so gracious is the time

*Horatio* So have I heard and do in part believe it, 165  
 But look, the morn in russet mantle clad,  
 Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill;  
 Break we our watch up, and by my advice  
 Let us impart what we have seen to night  
 Unto young Hamlet, for, upon my life,  
 170 This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him  
 Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,  
 As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?

*Marcellus* Let's do't, I pray, and I this morning know  
 Where we shall find him most conveniently. [Exeunt

### Scene II. THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

*Enter* CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark, GERTRUDE, the Queen,  
 Councillors, POLONIUS and his son LAERTES, VOLTIMAND  
 and CORNELIUS, HAMLET and Attendants

*King* Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death  
 The memory be green, and that it us befitted  
 To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom  
 To be contracted in one brow of woe; ~~faces~~  
 Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature,  
 That we with wisest sorrow think on him,

*Marcellus.* The apparition melted away as soon as the cock crowed. Some say that a little while before the coming of the Christmas season in which the birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated the cock crows all night, and then, it is said, no spirit dares come out of the grave, and the nights are free from all harm, then no planets exercise adverse influence, no fairy can bewitch, and no witch exercise enchantment; the time is so sacred and benign.

*Horatio.* I have heard the same thing, and believe it partly. But, look, the dawn, marked by red streaks, climbs above the yonder eastern hill, glistening with dew, let us break up our watch, and I advise you to tell Hamlet what we have seen to night, for I am absolutely certain that this spirit, uncommunicative to us, will speak to him. Do you agree that we shall inform him of this, as it becomes our friendship and duty.

*Marcellus.* Yes, we should do it. I know where we shall find him at his leisure this morning. *[Exeunt*

(Page 12. Lines 148—175)

## *Scene II*    A ROOM OF STATE IN THE CASTLE

*Enter the KING, QUEEN, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES,  
VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, LORDS and ATTENDANTS.*

*King.* Though we cherish the memory of our dear brother, Hamlet and it was our duty to mourn him, in which our whole kingdom should participate, yet good sense has struggled with our natural disposition to the point that while we remember him with sorrow as we should, we have not failed in our duty to ourselves. Therefore I have married my former

Together with remembrance of ourselves.  
 'Therefore our sometime sister, now our a  
 Th' imperial jointress to this war-like sta  
 Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy, 10  
 With an auspicious and a dropping eye,  
 With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage, *grief*  
 In equal scale weighing delight and dole, — *Sorrow*  
 Taken to wife. nor have we herein *bar'd rejected*  
 Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone *con-sent*  
 With this affair along. for all, our thanks  
 Now follows, that you know, young Fortinbras,  
 Holding a weak supposal of our worth,  
 Or thinking by our late dear brother's death  
 Our state to be *disjoint and out of frame*, *fol* 20  
 Collegued with the dream of his advantage,  
 He hath not fail'd to pester us with message, *annoyed*  
 Importing the surrender of those lands  
 Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,  
 To our most valiant brother. So much for him. 25  
 Now for ourself and for this time of meeting  
 Thus much the business is we have here writ  
 To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,  
 Who, *impotent and bed rid*, scarcely hears  
 Of this his nephew's purpose, to suppress 30  
 His further gait herein, in that the levies  
 The lists and full proportions, are all made  
 Out of his subject; and we here dispatch  
 You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,  
 For bearers of this greeting to old Norway; 35  
 Giving to you no further personal power  
 To business with the king, more than the scope  
 Of those *delated* articles allow. *Set forth in letter*  
 Farewell and let your *haste* commend your duty.

Cor. } *Promptitude*  
 Vol. } In that and all things will we show our duty. 40

King. We doubt it nothing · heartily farewell.

sister-in-law, now queen, heiress to this kingdom, engaged in warlike preparation. This has been done with a mixed feeling of joy and grief, with smile and tears, with mirth attending on funeral and mourning attending on marriage—in fact balancing joy and grief one against the other. Nor have I neglected to seek your wiser counsel, which has willingly approved the action. Let me thank you all for this. Now let me tell you that young Fortinbras underestimating our strength or thinking that the kingdom has fallen into weakness and confusion on the death of the late king, on the strength of his dream of advantage at this moment, has annoyed us with his demand for the surrender of those lands.

(Page 14, Lines 1—23)

Lost by his father, by legal bonds, to our most gallant brother. That ends the matter. Now for ourselves, and the purpose of this meeting. This is the object we have in view. We have written to the king of Norway uncle of young Fortinbras, who, weak and confined to bed by illness, hears nothing of his nephew's enterprise—and requested him to put down any farther proceeding of young Fortinbras in this matter, for all the troops, including the preparations that have been made, have been drawn from his subjects. We send you, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand, as bearers of our message to the old king of Norway. You have no farther power to deal with the king of Norway than stated in this document which is drawn up at length. Farewell, and do your duty in all commendable promptitude.

*Cornelius. Voltimand.* In regard to promptitude and in all other particulars, we shall fulfil our duty to your satisfaction.

*King.* We doubt it little. Most heartily I bid you goodbye



[*Exeunt* VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you ?  
 You told us of some suit; what is 't, Laertes ?  
 You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,  
 And lose your voice, what wouldst thou beg, Laertes, 45  
 That shall not be my offer, not thy asking ?  
 The head is not more native to the heart, *close*  
 The hand more instrumental to the mouth,  
 Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father  
 What wouldst thou have, Laertes ? *Sovereign*

*Laertes* My dread lord, 50  
 Your leave and favour to return to France,  
 From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,  
 To show my duty in your coronation,  
 Yet now, I must confess, that duty done, *all inclined*  
 My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France, 55  
 And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon. *Kind*

*King* Have you your father's leave ? What says  
 Polonius ?

*Polonius* He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow  
 leave

By laboursome petition, and at last  
 Upon his will I seal'd my hard consent 60  
 I do beseech you, give him leave to go

*King* Take thy fair hour, Laertes, time be time,  
 And thy best graces spend it at thy will

But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son,—

*Hamlet* [*Aside*] A little more than kin, and less than  
 kind 65

*King* How is it that the clouds still hang on you ?

*Hamlet* Not so, my lord, I am too much i' the sun;

*Queen* Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,

And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.  
 Do not for ever with thy veiled lids *drawn* 70

Seek for thy noble father in the dust

Thou know'st 'tis common, all that live must die,  
 Passing through nature to eternity.

[*Exeunt* VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS.

And now Laertes, what do you want? You told me of some petition. What is it, Laertes? If it is any reasonable demand, you know that I shall not refuse it. What can you demand, Laertes, that I shall not straight way grant, nor you can ask for? The head cannot be more closely connected with the heart, or the hand cannot be more helpful to the mouth than the king of Denmark could be indebted to your father. What do you demand, Laertes?

*Laertes* My sovereign lord, I seek your gracious permission to return to France, from where though willingly I came to Denmark to offer you my allegiance on your coronation,

(Page 14. Lines 24—53)

now I confess that my duty performed, my inclinations turn again to France, subject to your gracious leave and permission

*King.* Do you have your father's permission? What does Polonius say?

*Polonius.* He has, my lord, extorted from me my permission after his unceasing petition, when finally I had to give long withheld consent. I pray you, give him permission to go.

*King.* You have your wish then. May you have the best of time in France and spend it freely as you wish! Now about my Kinsman Hamlet and my son.

*Hamlet.* [*Aside*] A little more than a Kinsman, but with no kindly feeling towards his step-father.

*King.* Why do I see you still in gloom?

*Hamlet.* It is not true, my lord; I am too much in the sun.

*Queen.* Good Hamlet, discard the gloom that envelops you, and regard the king of Denmark as your friend. Do not forever seek, with your down cast looks, your noble father in the dust. You know that death is common—all who live must die passing through the gate of mortality to life eternal.

Hamlet Ay, madam, it is common  
 Queen If it be,  
 Why seems it so particular with thee? 75  
 Hamlet Seems, madam! Nay, it is, I know not 'seems'.  
 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother  
 Nor customary suits of solemn black,  
 Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,  
 No, nor the fruitful river in the eye, *Opious* 80  
 Nor the dejected haviour of the visage, *Con*  
 Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,  
 That can denote me truly, these indeed seem,  
 For they are actions that a man might play -  
 But I have that within which passeth show;  
 These but the trappings and the suits of woe. *garh.* 85  
 King 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature,  
 Hamlet, most forlorn.  
 To give these mourning duties to your father.  
 But, you must know, your father lost a father,  
 That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound 90  
 In filial obligation for some term *befitting*.  
 To do obsequious sorrow, but to persevere  
 In obstinate condolence, is a course  
 Of impious stubbornness, 'tis unmanly grief *irreverent*  
 It shows a will most incorrect to heaven, 95  
 A heart unfortuned, a mind impatient,  
 An understanding simple and unschoo'd.  
 For what we know must be and is as common  
 As any the most vulgar thing to sense, *Con*.  
 Why should we in our peevish opposition *in*  
 Take it to heart? Flie! 'tis a fault to heaven  
 A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,  
 To reason most absurd, whose common theme  
 Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,  
 From the first corse till he that died to-day, 105  
 'This must be so' We pray you, throw to earth  
 This unprevailing woe, and think of us *unhel*  
 As of a father; for let the world take note,

*Hamlet* Yes, madam, it is common.

*Queen.* If it be so, why does it seem so exceptional in your case ?

*Hamlet* It is not a question of *seeming*, madam. Do not suppose, good mother, that my dark cloak, or the suit of mourning so impressively black, or the enforced long-drawn sighs, or the tide of tears in my eyes,

(Page 16. 54—80).

or my sad looks, together with all the different manifestations of grief that can properly set me forth These may all be put on, for they can be stage managed by a man But within me there is something which cannot be shown, What you see is but the garb of grief.

*King.* It is most praiseworthy of you, Hamlet, to pay the tribute of grief to your father. But you ought to know that your father lost his, and that father lost his, and the survivor recognizes it to be his duty to mourn for a definite period, but to persist in it, and prolong it is what a man, stubborn and irreverent towards God would do, and there is little of manly spirit in such grief It betrays a will rebellious against God, a feeble, inconstant heart, a restless mind, a foolish and un-instructed understanding. If we know what is inevitable and common as any the most obvious, why should we in our rebellious mood, grieve over it ? Shame ! it is a crime against God, against the dead. and against nature—most absurd in reason, when one constantly harps on the death of one's father, when it has been known from the very first death till the last that it must be so. We request you to discard this fruitless grief and think of me,

(Page 18. Lines 81—107)

You are the most immediate to our throne;  
 And with no less nobility of love 110  
 Than that which dearest father bears his  
 Do I impart toward you For your intent  
 In going back to school in Wittenberg,  
 It is most retrograde to our desire, *Con*  
 And we beseech you, bend you to remain  
 Here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye,  
 Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son

*Queen* Let not thy mother lose her prayers *Hamlet*:  
 I pray thee, stay with us, go not to Wittenberg

*Hamlet* I shall in all my best obey you madam. 129

*King* Why, 'tis a loving and a fair repl'  
 Be as ourself in Denmark Madam, come,  
 This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet  
 Sits smiling to my heart; in grace whereof,  
 No jocular health that Denmark drinks to da 125  
 But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell  
 And the king's rouse the heavens shall bruit again, *Clouds*  
Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away

*Exeunt all except HAMLET.*

*Hamlet* O! that this too too solid flesh would melt;  
 'Thaw and resolve itself into a dew! *had* 130  
 Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd *not*  
*Heaven* 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!  
 How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable *un*  
 Seem to me all uses of this world!  
 Fie on 't! O he! 'tis an unweeded garden, 135  
 That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature  
 Possess it merely That it should come to this!  
 But two months dead - nay, not so much, not two:  
 So excellent a king; that was, to this,  
 Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother, *us*  
 That he might not beteem the winds of heaven  
 Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!  
 Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,  
 As if increase of appetite had grown

as a father, for let the people observe that you are the next heir to our throne, and that I offer you as noble love as the dearest father bears towards his son. As regards your intention to go back to the university of Wittenberg, it is contrary to our desire, and we pray you, persuade yourself to remain here to be a delight and comfort to us—our leading courtier, kinsman and our son.

*Queen.* Let not your mother's request be brushed aside, Hamlet. I pray you, stay with us; do not go to Wittenberg.

*Hamlet.* I shall obey you, Madam, to the best of my power.

*King.* That's a gracious reply. Consider yourself as one of us in Denmark. Madam, come with me. This gentle and free consent of Hamlet is pleasing to my heart, in honour of which the carousing of the king of Denmark to night shall be announced by salvoes so that the heavens may return the echo. Come away.

[*Exeunt all except HAMLET.*

*Hamlet.* Oh, that this <sup>dead flesh</sup> carriage weight of flesh would melt and dissolve into dew. If only God had not forbidden self-destruction. O God! O God! how all the usages of the world seem to be sickening and meaningless. Shame on it! it is like a garden in which weeds have been allowed to grow

(Page 20. 108—135)

and which is running wild; all that is foul and evil possesses it absolutely. It passes my belief that it should end like this. My father is but two months dead, no, it seems to be less than two months. And he was so excellent a king, and when I compare the two one is Hyperion, and the other (the present king) is a satyr (a goat-like, lascivious creature), and he was so devoted to my mother that he could not allow the rough winds to beat upon her face. Heaven and earth! Should I have to remember all this? Why, she would cling to him as if the more her desire grew the more it was satisfied. Yet within a month—I cannot bear to think of it—I should term woman a piece of frailty—what a short time a

By what it fed on, and yet, within a month— 145  
 Let me not think on't Frailty, thy name is woman!  
 A little month, or ere those shoes were old  
 With which she follow'd my poor father's body,  
 Like Niobe, all tears, why she, even she,—~~she~~  
 O God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason, 150  
 Would have mourn'd longer,—married with my uncle,  
 My father's brother, but no more like my father  
 Than I to Hercules within a month,  
 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears ~~down~~  
 Had left the flushing in her galled eyes, ~~redness~~ 155  
 She married O! most wicked speed, to post ~~the~~  
 With such dexterity to incestuous sheets  
 It's not nor it cannot come to, good:  
 But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

*Enter HORATIO MARCELLUS, and BERNARDO*

*Horatio* ~~welcome~~ Hail to your lordship!  
*Hamlet* I am glad to see you well 160  
*Horatio* or I do forget myself ~~of~~ if;  
*Horatio* The same, my lord, and your poor servant  
 ever  
*Hamlet* Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name  
 with you  
 And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?  
 Marcellus? 165

*Marcellus*. My good lord,—

*Hamlet* I am very glad to see you [*To BERNARDO*]  
 Good even, sir

But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

*Horatio* A truant disposition, good my lord.

*Hamlet* I would not hear your enemy say so,  
 Nor shall you do mine ear that violence

To make it trust of your own report ~~and~~ well

Against yourself. I know you are no truant  
 But what is your affair in Elsinore?

We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart 175

month is, or even those shoes with which she attended my father's burial like Niobe, streaming with tears, had lost their newness, why, she, even she (who was so passionately fond of my father), O God ! a beast that lacks reason, would have mourned longer—married my uncle, my father's brother ; but he at least resembles my father as I, Hercules. She married within a month before the soreness of her eyes, caused by weeping (now as it may appear insincerely) had disappeared. It must have been the most reprehensible haste to marry again. It is not good, and it cannot result in any thing good. Let my heart break, for I cannot breathe a word of it to anybody.

*Enter* HORATIO, MARCELLUS, and BERNARDO

*Horatio.* Welcome, your lordship !

*Hamlet.* I am glad to see you well. I think I see Horatio if I am not mistaken.

*Horatio.* Yes, it is Horatio, my lord, and ever your devoted servant

(Page 20. Lines 136—161)

*Hamlet.* Better say you are my good friend. I shall exchange that name (servant) with you. But why have you left Wittenberg, and what are you doing here, Horatio? Marcellus?

*Marcellus.* My good lord—

*Hamlet.* I am very glad to see you. Good evening, sir. But I wonder what you are doing here after leaving Wittenberg.

*Horatio.* I have just given the ship, my good lord.

*Hamlet.* I would not believe your enemy reporting this of you ; nor can you enforce my ear to believe this report from your mouth. I know you are not one to slip away. But what brings you to Elsinore ? We shall teach you to drink harder before you depart.





*Horatio.* My lord, I came to attend your father's funeral.

*Hamlet.* I pray y<sup>e</sup>u, do not make sport of me, my fellow-student. I think you came to see my mother's marriage.

*Horatio.* Indeed, my lord, it came so soon after your father's funeral.

*Hamlet.* It is a matter of saving expenses, Horatio. The dishes that were prepared for the funeral, came handy for the marriage feast. I wish I had met my deadliest enemy in heaven before I had witnessed that day, Horatio. Sometimes I seem to see my father

*Horatio.* Where, my lord ?

*Hamlet.* In my imagination, Horatio.

*Horatio.* I saw him once, he was a gracious and handsome king.

*Hamlet.* He was a man in all completeness. I shall not see again one like him.

*Horatio.* My lord, I think I saw him last night

*Hamlet.* Saw whom ?

(Page 22. Lines 162—189).

*Horatio.* My lord, I saw the king your father

*Hamlet.* The king my father !

*Horatio.* Hold in check your astonishment for a while, and listen to me attentively, till I narrate this wonderful incident while these gentlemen will bear witness to it.

*Hamlet.* For God's sake, let me hear

*Horatio.* Two nights running these two gentlemen, Marcellus and Bernardo, as they kept watch, met the king your father at dead of night. A shape resembling your father, armed from head to foot, appeared before them, and with marching gait, slow and majestic, passed by them ; thrice he passed and repassed before their eyes, amazed with terror, within the reach of his staff, while they, chilled with fear, stood speechless, and did not speak to him. This they communicated to me in strictest secrecy and I kept watch with them on the third night, and there, as they had told me, in exact point of time, and in the shape described to me, each word of theirs being confirmed the apparition came. I knew your father ; these hands of mine are not more alike than your father and the apparition.

Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,  
 Form of the thing each word made true and good, 210  
 The apparition comes I knew your father,  
 These hands are not more like

*Hamlet* But where was this?

*Marcellus* My lord, upon the platform where we  
 watch'd

*Hamlet* Did you not speak to it?

*Horatio* My lord, I did,  
 But answer made it none, yet once methought 215  
 It lifted up its head, and did address  
 Itself to motion, like as it would speak  
 But even then the morning cock crew loud  
 And at the sound it shrank in haste away,  
 And vanish'd from our sight

*Hamlet* 'Tis very strange. 220

*Horatio* As I do live, my honour'd lord, 'tis true,  
 And we did think it writ down in our duty  
 To let you know of it

*Hamlet* Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me  
 Hold you the watch to-night?

*Marcellus* { We do, my lord. 225  
*Bernardo* }

*Hamlet* Arm'd, say you?

*Marcellus* { Arm'd, my lord  
*Bernardo* }

*Hamlet* From top to toe?

*Marcellus* { My lord, from head to foot  
*Bernardo* }

*Hamlet* Then saw you not his face? *visi*

*Horatio* O yes! my lord, he wore his beaver up

*Hamlet* What! look'd he frowningly? 230

*Horatio* A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

*Hamlet* Pale or red?

*Horatio* Nay, very pale

*Hamlet* And fix'd his eyes upon you?

*Hamlet.* But where did he come ?

*Marcellus* My lord, upon the platform where we kept watch

*Hamlet.* Did you speak to the spirit ?

*Horatio.* My lord, I did. But it made no answer. Yet once it seemed to me that it lifted up its head, and made a motion

(Page 24. Lines 190—215).

to speak, but at that moment the cock crowed loud, and at the sound it dwindled away and vanished from our sight.

*Hamlet.* It is very strange.

*Horatio.* I swear by my life that it is true, my gracious lord. And we thought that it was our duty to let you know of it

*Hamlet.* Indeed, sirs, but it perplexes my mind. Are you keeping watch to-night ?

*Marcellus, Bernardo.* We do, my lord.

*Hamlet.* You say that the spirit was armed ?

*Marcellus, Bernardo* Yes, my lord

*Hamlet* From head to foot ?

*Marcellus, Bernardo* Yes, my lord,

*Hamlet.* You did not then see his face ?

*Horatio* Yes, my lord, he had his visor lifted.

*Hamlet.* Did he wear a look of frown ?

*Horatio.* It was a face that expressed sorrow rather than anger.

*Hamlet.* Was it pale or red ?

*Horatio.* Yes, very pale.

*Hamlet* Did he fix his eyes upon you ?

*Horatio* Most constantly

*Hamlet* I would I had been there

*Horatio.* It would have much amazed you, 235

*Hamlet* Very like, very like. Stay'd it long?

*Horatio* While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

*Marcellus* { Longer, longer.  
*Bernardo.* }

*Horatio* Not when I saw't

*Hamlet.* His beard was grizzled & no &

*Horatio* It was, as I have seen it in his life, 240

sable silver d

*Hamlet* I will watch to night;

Perchance 'twill walk again.

*Horatio* I warrant it will

*Hamlet.* If it assume my noble father's person,

I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape

And bid me hold my peace I pray you all, 245

If you have hitherto conceal'd this sight,

Let it be tenable in your silence still,

And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,

Give it an understanding, but no tongue

I will requite your loves So, fare you well 250

Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,

I'll visit you.

*All.* Our duty to your honour.

*Hamlet* Your loves, as mine to you Farewell

[*Exeunt HORATIO, MARCELLUS, and BERNARDO.*]

My father's spirit (in arms! all is not well;

I doubt some foul play would the night were come! 255

Till then sit still, my soul: foul deeds will rise,

Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes [*Exit.*]

*Scene III. A ROOM IN POLONIUS' HOUSE*

*Enter LAERTES and OPELIA*

*Laertes* My necessities are embark'd, farewell  
And sister, as the winds give benefit,

*Horatio* Most steadily.

*Hamlet*. I wish I had been present.

*Horatio*. It would have much astonished you

*Hamlet*. Very likely. Did it stay long?

*Horatio*. As long as one might take to count a hundred without haste.

*Marcellus, Bernardo* It stayed longer.

*Horatio* Not when I saw it

(Page 26. Lines 216—239)

*Hamlet*. Was not his beard grey?

*Horatio* It was just as it was when I saw him alive—black, streaked with grey.

*Hamlet*. I will watch to-night. Perhaps it will walk again.

*Horatio*. I am sure it will.

*Hamlet*. If it comes in the shape of my father, I will speak to it, though hell might open and forbid me to speak. I request you all, if you have so long kept it a secret, let it be still kept a secret; and whatever may happen tonight, observe it and do not talk of it. I shall reward your friendship. So farewell. I will meet you on the platform between eleven and twelve.

*All*. We offer our duty to your lordship.

*Hamlet* Let me have your love as I offer mine to you.  
Farewell.

[*Exeunt* HORATIO, MARCELLUS, BERNARDO,

My father's spirit appeared armed. There must be something wrong. I suspect some treachery. I wait eagerly for the night. Let my soul hold itself in patience till then. Foul deeds, though they are buried deep, must reveal themselves to human eyes. [*Exit*.

*Scene III. A ROOM IN POLINIUS' HOUSE*

*Enter* LAERTES and OPHELIA

*Laertes*. All my necessary things have been put aboard. Farewell. Sister, whenever the winds are favourable, and the means of conveyance is available, write to me.

(Page 28 Lines 239—257)

*Scene III* Lines 1—3

*Available*

And convey is assistant, do not sleep,  
 But let me hear from you

Ophelia.

Do you doubt that?

Laertes For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour, <sup>do not doubt</sup> ~~do~~  
 Hold it a fashion and alloy in blood, <sup>do not doubt</sup> ~~do~~  
 A violet in the youth of primy nature,  
 Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,  
 The perfume and suppliance of a minute;  
 No more

Ophelia

No more but so?*do you think?*  
*then then*

Laertes

*growing*

Think it no more

10

For nature, diescent, does not grow alone  
 In thews and bulk, but, as this temple waxes,  
 The inward service of the mind and soul  
 Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you now  
 And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch <sup>decays</sup> ~~hope~~  
 The virtue of his will, but you must fear,  
 His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own;  
 For he himself is subject to his birth. <sup>his choice</sup> ~~his choice~~

15

He may not, as unvalued persons do,  
Carve for himself, for on his choice depends  
 The safety and health of this whole state,  
 And therefore must his choice be circumscrib'd  
 Unto the voice and yielding of that body  
 Whereof he is the head. Then if he says he loves you,  
 It fits your wisdom so far to believe it  
 As he in his particular act and place  
 May give his saying deed, which is no further  
 Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.  
 Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain,  
 If with too credent ear you list his songs;  
 Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open  
 To his unmaster'd importunity. *unrestrained*  
 Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister;  
 And keep you in the rear of your affection,  
 Out of the shot and danger of desire. *tempt*  
 The chariest maid is prodigal enough,

20

25

30

35

and do not miss the opportunity.

*Ophelia* Have you any doubt about that ?

*Laertes* As regards Hamlet, and what notice he takes of you, regard it as the way with a young man and a fancy of the moment, it is just like a violet, blooming early in the spring—displaying all its fairness, but not desired to last, sweet in fragrance, but short-lived—its perfume and beauty cannot last more than a minute.

*Ophelia* Do you think it is no more than that ?

*Laertes*. Think of it no more than that, for as the body grows the mind and the soul develop with the bodily muscles and dimension. He may love you now, and his intention may be all honourable, but you ought to be careful, considering his great position, he is not free in his will, his choice must be conditioned by his birth, he cannot, as persons of no esteem may do, choose his own destiny, for on his choice depend the safety and welfare of the whole kingdom : therefore his choice must be limited by a consideration of those of whom he is the head. Then if he confesses that he loves you, you should be sensible enough to believe it in so far as he may be able to confirm it by virtue of his place and action—and this cannot stretch beyond the limit, permitted by the king of Denmark

You should consider how you risk your honour if you listen with too credulous an ear to his addresses, or surrender your heart. You should be on your guard, my dear sister ; hold yourself aloof from him, and let no passion taint you. The most cautious maiden is too careless if she reveals her beauty to the moon ; virtue itself is not immune from slander, the worm eats into the buds of the spring too often before they have opened their petals ; in the prime of youth there is great risk like the foul mists and vapours of the early morning. Be cautious ; you can be very safe when you fear the danger (to youth and beauty). Youth is apt to break loose, even when there is none to tempt or corrupt it.



If she unmask her beauty to the moon  
 Virtue herself <sup>standing</sup> escapes not calumnious strokes.  
 The canker galls the infants of the spring, <sup>de</sup>  
 Too oft before their buttons be disclos'd,  
 And in the morn and liquid dew of youth  
 Contagious balstments are most imminent.  
 But vary, then, best safety lies in fear  
 Youth to itself rebels, though none else near  
 Ophelia I shall the effect of this good lesson keep, 45  
 As watchman to my heart But, good my brother,  
 Do not, as some ungracious pastors do, <sup>preachers</sup>  
 Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,  
 Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine, <sup>is</sup>  
 Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads, 50  
 And recks not his own rede <sup>pleasure</sup>  
 \* Laertes <sup>Criminal</sup> O, fear me not,  
 stay too long, but here my father comes.

Enter POLONIUS.

A double blessing is a double grace,  
 Occasion smiles upon a second leave <sup>we have</sup>  
 Polonius Yet here, Laertes! aboard aboard, for 55  
 shame!  
 The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,  
 And you are stay'd for There, my blessing with thee  
 And these few precepts in thy memory, <sup>you must not lay bare</sup>  
 Look thou character Give thy thoughts no tongue,  
 Nor any unproportion'd thought his act <sup>sworped</sup>  
 Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar <sup>Cheap</sup>  
 The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,  
 Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel, <sup>sl</sup>  
 But do not dull thy palm with entertainment <sup>e</sup>  
 Of each new hatch'd, unforg'd comrade. Beware 65  
 Of entrance to a quarrel, but, being in,  
 Bear 't that the opposed may beware of thee  
 Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice,  
 Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.  
 Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy, 70

*Ophelia.* I shall remember your warning, and keep watch over myself. But, my good brother, do not, as some vile priests do, show me the hard and toilsome path of virtue, while, like a bloated and careless rake, himself follows the pleasant path of self-indulgence, and breaks his own counsel.

*Laertes.* You may have confidence in me. I am tarrying too long ; but here comes my father.

*Enter POLONIUS*

Here is the occasion for a double blessing—and it means twice good luck to me. We have the chance of a second farewell.

(Page 10, Lines 29—53)

*Polonius.* You are still here, Laertes ! You should be aboard by now. The wind has started favourably, and you are being waited for, there is again my blessing for you

[ *Laying his hand on Laertes' head.*

And mind that you carry these few instructions, well stored in your memory. You must not lay bare your views, nor carry any unripe thought into effect, you may cultivate familiarity with others, but you must not make yourself too cheap ; you should attach your friends to yourself by the strongest ties after having tested their sincerity, but do not entertain every new, callow companion and so lower yourself, mind that you do not provoke a quarrel, but if you are involved in it, face it though, so that your opponent may be afraid of you ; listen to every man's advice, but give none of your own, take each man's judgement, but withhold your own. Let your clothes be as costly as you can afford, but not fantastic ; let your clothes be expensive, but not showy, for the dress often shows the man. And the men of France—those who are in the best position, are very particular and expensive in the matter of dress. Do not be either a borrower or a

But not express'd in fancy, rich, not gaudy  
 For the apparel oft proclaims the man,  
 And they in France of the best rank and station  
 Are most select and generous, chief in that  
 Neither a borrower, nor a lender be 75  
 For loan oft loses both itself and friend, ~~Thou~~  
 And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry  
 This above all to thine own self be true,  
 And it must follow, as the night the day,  
 Thou canst not then be false to any man 80  
 Farewell, my blessing season this in thee!

*Laertes.* Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord

*Polonius.* The time invites you; go, your servants tend.

*Laertes.* Farewell, Ophelia; and remember well  
 What I have said to you.

*Ophelia.* 'Tis in my memory lock'd, 85

And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

*Laertes.* Farewell. [Exit]

*Polonius.* What is 't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

*Ophelia.* So please you, something touching th

*Hamlet.* By G—

*Polonius.* Marry, well bethought. He 90

'Tis told me, he hath very oft of late ~~and you~~  
 Given private time to you, and you yourself  
 Have of your audience been most free and bounteous  
 If it be so,—as so 'tis put on me,

And that in way of caution—I must tell you, 95  
 You do not understand yourself so clearly  
 As it behoves my daughter and your honour  
 What is between you? give me up the truth

*Ophelia.* He hath my lord, of late made many tenders  
 Of his affection to me ~~with some words~~ 100

*Polonius.* Affection? pooh; you speak like a green girl,  
 Unsifted in such perilous circumstance  
 Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?

*Ophelia.* I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

lender, for money lent is often lost together with the friend to whom it is lent and borrowing makes one unthrifty Above all mind this; to yourself be true, and then as the night follow the day, as invariably you cannot be false to anybody. Farewell! May my blessing bring all these counsels to ripeness in you in due times!

(Page 32 Lines 54—80)

*Laertes.* I take leave of you, my lord, with all humility.

*Polonius.* There is no more time to lose. Your servants are waiting for you.

*Laertes.* Farewell, Ophelia, remember all that I have told you

*Ophelia.* It is locked in my memory, and it will be in your keeping.

*Laertes.* Farewell [Exit

*Polonius.* What is it, Ophelia, that he has spoken to you?

*Ophelia.* If it may please you, it is something concerning Lord Hamlet.

*Polonius.* Well remembered I have been told that he has lately been paying attention to you, and you have freely admitted him to your presence. If it be so—as it has been imparted to me by way of a hint of caution—I must tell you, you do not understand your position and honour as my daughter as you should. What is going on between you two? Tell me the truth.

*Ophelia.* He has, my lord, lately made professions of love to me

*Polonius.* Love! What an idea! You speak like an inexperienced girl, being ignorant how to conduct yourself in such a delicate situation. Do you believe his professions of love, as you call them?

*Ophelia.* I do not know, my lord, what I should think of the matter.

*Polonius.* Marry, I'll <sup>instruct</sup> teach you think yourself a baby,  
That you have t'en these tenders for true pay, <sup>offer</sup> 106  
Which are not sterling Tender yourself more dearly, <sup>value</sup>  
Or,—not to crack the wind of the poor phrase, <sup>Sketch</sup>  
Running it thus,—you'll tender me a fool

*Ophelia* My lord, he hath importun'd me with love 110  
In honourable fashion. <sup>fashion</sup>

*Polonius* Ay, fashion you may call it go to, go to

*Ophelia* And hath given countenance to this speech,  
my lord, <sup>suffer</sup>

With almost all the holy vows of heaven

*Polonius.* Ay, spruces to catch woodcocks. I do  
know, <sup>traps</sup> <sup>birds</sup> 115

When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul <sup>generous</sup>  
Lends the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter,  
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both,  
Even in their promise, as it is a making.  
You must not take for fire From this time 120

Be somewhat scantier of your maiden presence;  
Set your entreatments at a higher rate <sup>Favours</sup>  
Than a command to parley. For Lord Hamlet,  
Believe so much in him, that he is young,  
And with a larger tether may he walk <sup>freedom</sup>. 125  
Than may be given you. in few, Ophelia.

Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers, <sup>agents</sup>  
Not of that dye which their investments show,  
But mere implicators of unholy suits, <sup>Solicitors</sup>  
Breathing like sanctified and pious bonds, 180  
The better to beguile This is for all: <sup>deceive</sup>  
I would not in plain terms, from this time forth,  
Have you so slander my moment's leisure,  
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.  
Look to't, I charge you; come your ways. 185

*Ophelia.* I shall obey, my lord.

[Exeunt.]

*Polonius* Let me instruct you. Think yourself as quite innocent, and suppose that you have taken these advances as a genuine expression of love, which they are not. Look out sharp (Page 34 Lines 81—106)

Place a higher value on yourself; do not give your love so cheaply. Or not to wear out the phrase "tender" by too much work—you will show me up to be a fool. (Polonius says that he is using the phrase "t-nder" so much that it is like a horse which is ridden too much, and hence becomes cracked or broken in wind. This is an example of Elizabethan wit which was to play upon double meanings or use a word first in one sense and then in another.

*Ophelia* My lord, he has wooed me in an honourable manner

*Polonius* Nonsense, yes it is just the fashion of the moment which quickly changes.

*Ophelia*. And he has confirmed his vows of love by swearing every solemn oath in the sight of heaven

*Polonius*. Truly, these are traps to catch you as a woodcock, is caught. I know that when the blood is burning with passion, the soul is generous in the vows it allows the tongue to utter. But this blazing passion, my daughter, gives more light than warmth, and as light and warmth die out even as the promise is being made. You must not mistake this for the true fire of love as that very promise is being made. From this time onwards be more careful in bestowing your virgin company on him. Think more highly of yourself than to consider those entreaties of his as commands to join in conference with him. As regards Lord Hamlet, remember that he is young and can act with greater freedom than is allowed to you. Briefly, Ophelia, do not believe his vows to be true because they are agents which are not really of the colour they appear to be, but they are only advocates of wicked proposals though they speak in the language of sacred and pious promises, the better to deceive you. This is the sum total of what I have to say. In plain words, I do not wish you from now onwards to spend any leisure moment in such a slander provoking manner as to spend it in conversation with Lord Hamlet. Attend to this I order you! Come along with me to where you should properly be, i. e., in the privacy of your own home.

*Ophelia* I shall obey you, my lord.

[Exeunt

## Scene IV THE PLATFORM

*Enter HAMLET, HORATIO, and MARCELLUS*

Hamlet The air bites shrewdly ; it is very cold

Horatio It is a nipping and an eager air *Sharp*

Hamlet What hour now ?

Horatio I think it lacks of twelve.

Marcellus No, it is struck

Horatio Indeed ? I heard it not : then it draws near  
the season 5

Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk

*[A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off within.]*

What does this mean, my lord ?

Hamlet The king doth wake to-night and takes his  
*rouse, Feast and merrymaking dance*Keeps wassail and the swaggering up spring reels, *wild*

And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down, 10

The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out

The triumph of his pledge

Horatio. Is it a custom ?

Hamlet Ay, marry, is 't

But to my mind,—though I am native here

And to the manner born,—it is a custom *new* 15

More honour'd in the breach than the observance

This heavy headed revel east and west

Makes us tradit'd and tax'd of other nations.

The clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase*Soul* our addition ; and indeed it takes 20

From our achievements, though perform'd at height,

The pith and marrow of our attribute

So, oft it chances in particular men,

That for some vicious mole of nature in them, *defect*

As, in their birth,—wherein they are not guilty, 25

Since nature cannot choose his origin,—

By the overgrowth of some complexion, *and tendency*Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,Or by some habit that too much o'erleavens *to*

## Scene IV.—THE PLATFORM BEFORE THE CASTLE

*Enter HAMLET, HORATIO, and MARCELLUS**Hamlet.* The air is raw and biting cold.*Horatio* It is a bitterly cold air.*Hamlet* What is the time now ?*Horatio* I think it is a little short of twelve.*Marcellus* No, it has struck twelve.*Horatio.* Is it so ? I did not hear it ; then the time is drawing near, when the spirit would be abroad.*[ A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off within*

What does this mean, my lord ?

*Hamlet* The king is carousing to night ; it is a drinking bout attended by the wildest dance. And, as he quaffs Rhenish wine, the kettle-drum and trumpet blazen the revelry forth to the world.*Horatio.* Is it a custom here ?*Hamlet* Yes, it is ; but in my opinion, though I am an inhabitant of the place, and am bred on the tradition, it is a custom which it would be better to break than to observe. This outrageous revelry

(Page 38. Lines 135. Scene IV. Lines 1—11)

gives us a bad name among other nations east and west. They call us drunkards, and tarnish our fair name with foul abuses ; indeed it deprives us of the credit of our highest achievements. So often it happens in the case of particular individuals that for some defect of nature, as they may have been born with, in which they have no choice of their own. say the excess of some tendency, defying all restrictions that reason may set, or some habit that heavily reacts upon pleas





ing manners, charged as they are with this capital defect, which they owe either to nature or to accident, their virtues, no matter how unblemished and boundless they may be, shall be infected in the judgement of the world in connexion with that our fault. So it is a single defect that neutralizes all his virtue.

*Horatio* Look, my lord, it comes !

*Enter GHOST*

*Hamlet* May angels and heavenly powers protect us ! Whether you are a good spirit or an evil spirit, whether you bring sweet airs from heaven or pestilential vapours from hell, whether your purpose is malicious or benevolent, you come in a shape that provokes question, and I must speak to you. I call thee Hamlet.

(Page 33. Lines 18—44)

King, father, royal Dane. Oh, answer me. Let me not break my heart in suspense, but tell me why your bones, buried with sacred rites, have escaped through the grave-clothes ; why the tomb in which we saw you confined, has opened its heavy and marble portals, and let you out. What does this mean ? that you, dead body, again in complete armour, are abroad in the moonlight again, and fill the night with horror, and distract us, frail, mortal creatures as we are, with thoughts beyond our comprehension ? What does this mean ? What are you here for ? What do you want us to do ?

[GHOST beckons HAMLET.]

*Horatio*. It beckons you to accompany it, as if it had some important communication to make to you alone.

*Marcellus*. Look with what graceful motion, it beckons you to a more solitary place. But do not follow it

Horatio No, by no means

Hamlet It will not speak, then. I will follow it

Horatio Do not, my lord

Hamlet. Why, what should be the fear.

I do not set my life at a pin's fee, *of little worth.* 65

And for my soul, what can it do to that,

Being a thing immortal as itself?

It waves me forth again, I'll follow it

Horatio What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord

Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff 70

That beetles o'er his base into the sea, *overhanging or*

And there assume some other horrible form, *over his*

Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason,

And draw you into madness? think of it,

The very place puts toys of desperation, *fancies* 75

Without more motive, into every brain

That looks so many fathoms to the sea

And hears it roar beneath

Hamlet It waves me still Go on, I'll follow thee

Marcellus You shall not go, my lord

Hamlet Hold off your hands 80

Horatio Be rul'd, you shall not go

Hamlet My fate cries out,

And makes each petty artery in this body

As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve [Ghost beckons

Still am I call'd Unhand me, gentlemen,

[Breaking from them

Be heaven! I'll make a ghost of him that lets me: 85

I say, away! Go on, I'll follow thee

*ghosts move and retire* [Exeunt Ghost and HAMLET

Horatio He waxes desperate with imagination

Marcellus Let's follow, 'tis not fit thus to obey him

Horatio Have after. To what issue will this come?

Marc Something is rotten in the state of Denmark. 9

Horatio Heaven will direct it

Marcellus

Nay, let's follow him.

[Exeunt

*Horatio.* You must not certainly.

*Hamlet.* As it will not speak, I must follow it

*Horatio.* Do not please.

*Hamlet.* Why, there is no cause of fear. I hold my life of little worth

(Page 40 Lines 45—65)

And as for my soul, it can do no harm to it, because it is immortal. It beckons me again, I will follow it.

*Horatio.* I know it if it may tempt you towards the sea, my lord, or to the fearful summit of the crag, that overlooks the sea, and there may assume some dreaded shape, which may infect your sanity, and drive you mad. Just think of it. The nature of the place fills the brain with desperate fancies, when you look down into the sea from a reeling height and hear its roar

*Hamlet.* It beckons me still. Go on, I will follow you.

*Marcellus.* You shall not go, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Take off your hands

*Horatio.* Be advised; you shall not go.

*Hamlet.* My destiny calls, and makes every small artery in my body as strong as the Nemean lion's nerve. Still it waves me; take off your hands, gentlemen. I swear, I will kill him who stands in my way, I say, let me go. Proceed, I will follow you.

[*Exeunt* GHOST and HAMLET.]

*Horatio.* He grows more and more desperate as his imagination possesses him.

*Marcellus.* Let us follow, it is not proper to obey him.

*Horatio.* Follow him. I do not know what will be the result of it.

*Marcellus.* Something must be wrong with the state of Denmark,

*Horatio.* The heavenly powers will guide its destiny.

(Page 42. Lines 66—91)

*Marcellus.* Nay, let us follow him.

[*Exeunt*

## Scene V ANOTHER PART OF THE PLATFOM

*Enter Ghost and HAMLET*

*Hamlet* Whither wilt thou lead me? speak, I'll go  
no further

*Ghost* Mark me . . .

*Hamlet* I will

*Ghost* My hour is almost come,  
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames *fall*  
Must render up myself

*Hamlet* Alas, poor ghost!

*Ghost* Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing 5  
To what I shall unfold

*Hamlet* Speak, I am bound to hear

*Ghost* So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear

*Hamlet* What?

*Ghost* I am thy father's spirit,  
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night, 10  
And for the day confin'd to fast in fire,  
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
Are burnt and purg'd away But that I am forbid  
To tell the secrets of my prison house,  
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word *agonise* 15  
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,  
Make thy two eyes like stars, start from their spheres,  
Thy knotted and combined locks to part, *hair*  
And each particular hair to stand an end,  
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine: *a kind of*  
But this eternal blazon must not be *to publish*  
To ears of flesh and blood List, list, O, list! *mark*  
If thou didst ever thy dear father love—

*Hamlet*. O God!

*Ghost* Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder 25

*Hamlet* Murder!

*Ghost* Murder most foul, as in the best it is,  
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural

*Hamlet* Haste me to know 't, that I, with wings as  
sw

*Scene V* ANOTHER PART OF THE PLATFORM*Enter GHOST and HAMLET*

*Hamlet.* Where are you going to lead me? Speak I will follow you no farther.

*Ghost.* Listen to me.

*Hamlet.* I will

*Ghost.* The exact hour is almost come when I go back to hell, full of fire where I suffer torment

*Hamlet.* Alas, unhappy Ghost!

*Ghost.* Do not pity me, but listen with all attention to what I am going to disclose.

*Hamlet.* Speak, my ear is open unto you.

*Ghost.* So you will have to revenge, when you have heard me.

*Hamlet.* What?

*Ghost.* I am your father's spirit, and I am fated for a certain period of time to walk out at night and to be tormented in fires of hell in the day time till the crimes of earthly life are fully expiated. If I had not been forbidden to reveal secrets of my place of detention, I could tell a tale, which would fill your heart with agony, curdle your youthful blood, make your two eyes like stars, dart out of their sockets, your tangled hair part, each particular hair standing an end

(Page 44. Lines 92. *Scene V* Lines 1—19)

like quills upon the sensitive porcupine. But this story of the land of the dead must not reach the ears of mortals. But listen to me, do listen if you ever loved your father.

*Hamlet.* O God!

*Ghost.* Revenge his most outrageous murder.

*Hamlet.* Murder!

*Ghost.* Any murder is most foul, but this—foulest, strangest and most monstrous.

*Hamlet.* Let me know it at once so that as swift as meditation or thoughts of love, I may execute the revenge.

As meditation or the thoughts of love,  
May sweep to my revenge

*Ghost* I find thee apt, ~~grave~~  
And duller shouldst thou be than the ~~fat weed~~  
That ~~roots~~ <sup>grows</sup> itself in ease on Lethe wharf, ~~river~~ <sup>in</sup>  
Wouldst thou not stir in this Now, Hamlet, he  
'Tis given out, that sleeping in mine orchard, ~~of~~  
A serpent stung me, so the whole ear of Denmark  
Is by a forged process of my death  
Rankly abus'd, but know' thou noble youth,  
The serpent that did sting thy father's life  
Now wears his crown

*Hamlet* O my prophetic soul ! 40  
My uncle !

*Ghost* Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,  
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,—  
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power 45  
So to seduce!—won to his shameful lust  
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen  
O Hamlet, what a failling off was there !  
From me, whose love was of that dignity,  
That it went hand in hand even with the vow 50  
I made to her in marriage, and to decline  
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor  
To those of mine !

But virtue, as it never will be mov'd,  
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven, 55  
So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,  
Will sate itself in a celestial bed,  
And prey on garbage

✓ But, soft ! methinks I scent the morning air,  
Brief let me be Sleeping within mine orchard,  
My custom always in the afternoon, 60  
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,  
With juice of cursed hebanon in a vial,  
And in the porches of mine ears did poi  
The leperous distilment; whose effect

*Ghost.* It pleases me to see you so prompt. If you are not at once moved to action by this, you must be more sluggish and spiritless than the rank weeds that grow on the shores of Lethe. Now, Hamlet, hear. It has been made known that sleeping in my garden I was stung by a serpent, and so all the people of Denmark were grossly deceived by an invented story of my death. But let me tell you, noble youth, that the serpent that stung your father dead, now wears his crown.

*Hamlet.* So the instinct within prompted. It was my uncle!

*Ghost.* Yes, that brute, guilty of incest and adultery, with the charm of his wit and the gifts of a traitor—and they were so vile that they had the power of seduction—won over my queen who seemed to be so virtuous to be an accomplice in the shameful crime of lust.

(Page 46. Lines 20—46)

O Hamlet, what grievous fall was there! From me whose love conformed in all particulars to the marriage vow, and to be attracted to one who was so low in natural abilities, compared to me. But as virtue (chastity) cannot be perverted though she is tempted by lust in the shape of an angel, so lust, though residing in an angelic form, will soon be satiated by sacred love, and turn to unlawful indulgence. But, patience! I smell the breath of the morning. Let me be brief. Sleeping in my garden, as it was my custom in the afternoon, your uncle approached me in that safe hour, and poured the juice of henbane into the holes of my ears, with the effect that it covered me with leprosy. It was very quick in action; it coursed through the blood as swiftly as quick silver, destroying its properties, and turning it like curdled milk; and at once a scarf, resembling that of leprosy, at once covered my smooth body with loathsome scales.

(Page 46 Lines 47—72)



Holds such an enmity with blood of man  
 That swift as quicksilver it ~~courses~~ <sup>flows</sup> through  
 The natural gates and alleys of the body,<sup>the</sup>  
 And with a sudden vigour it doth ~~posset~~ <sup>pass</sup> ~~it~~  
 And curd, like eager droppings into milk,  
 The thin and wholesome blood so did it mine  
 And a most instant tatter bark'd about, ~~pass~~  
 Most lazar-like with vile and loathsome crust,  
 All my smooth body <sup>scale</sup>

Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand  
 Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch'd. 75  
 Out off even in the blossoms of my sin,  
 Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd,  
 No reckoning made, but sent to my account  
 With all my imperfections on my head  
 O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible! 80  
 If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not,  
 Let not the royal bed of Denmark be  
 A couch for luxury and damned incest <sup>lust</sup>  
 But, howsoever thou pursu'st this act,  
 Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive! 85  
 Against thy mother aught, leave her to heaven,  
 And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,  
 The prick and sting her Fare thee well at once!  
 The glow-worm shows the matin to be near, <sup>mon</sup>  
 And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire.  
 Adieu, adieu! Hamlet, remember me <sup>or</sup> [Exit.

Hamlet. O all you <sup>powers</sup> host of heaven! O earth! What else?  
 And shall I couple hell? O fie! hold, my heart;  
 And you, my sineews, grow not instant old, <sup>me</sup>  
 But bear me stiffly up! Remember thee!  
 Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat  
 In this distracted globe Remember thee!  
 Yes, from the table of my memory  
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records, <sup>and</sup>  
 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,  
 That youth and observation copied there;

Thus I was, while sleeping, cut off by a brother's hand, from life, from crown, from queen, at one stroke—cut off without being given a chance of confessing my sins and receiving the sacred sacrament and anointing; I was sent unprepared to my God, bearing the weight of all my sins. It was too horrible. If you are human, do not bear it. Let not the royal bed of Denmark be converted into a bed of lust and incest. But whatever plan of revenge you follow, let not your mind be effected by any ill will against your mother, or your soul contrive any evil against her. Leave her in the hands of God, and to the pricks of her conscience. Farewell, at once. The glow-worm shows that the day is to break, and begins to fade away. Farewell to you; remember me.

*Hamlet.* O all you heavenly powers! O earth! What else is there that I may cry upon? Shall I invoke hell? O shame! Let not my heart burst, and you, my muscles, do not give way at once, but hold me up, however painfully. Remember you! Yes, poor Ghost, so long as any trace of memory remains in this distracted brain. Remember you! Yes, from the pages of my memory I will erase all unimportant, foolish impressions, all maxims learnt from books, all images, all sensibilities

(Pages 48. Lines 73—100,

that youthful observation recorded there, and your command alone shall live within the compass of my brain, kept free from baser substance. I swear it by heaven. O most evil-hearted woman! O villain, smiling, damned villain. Let me put it down in my note-book, that one may smile and smile, and be a villain. [*Writing.* At least I am sure it may be true in Denmark. So, uncle, I know you now. Now to

And thy commandment all alone shall live  
 Within the book and volume of my brain,  
 Unmix'd with baser matter. yes, by heaven!  
 O most pernicious woman! *descriptive* 105  
 O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!  
 My tables,—meet, it is I set it down,  
 That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain,  
 At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark *[Writing.]*  
 So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word. 110  
 It is, 'Adieu, adieu! remember me.'

I have sworn 't

*Horatio* *[Within]* My lord, my lord!

*Marcellus* *[Within.]* Lord Hamlet!

*Horatio* *[Within]* Heaven secure him!

*Marcellus.* *[Within]* So be it!

*Horatio.* *[Within]* Illo, ho, ho, my lord! 115

*Hamlet.* Illo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come

*Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS*

*Marcellus.* How is 't, my noble lord?

*Horatio* What news, my lord?

*Hamlet* O! wonderful

*Horatio* Good my lord, tell it.

*Hamlet* No, you will reveal it

*Horatio.* Not I, my lord, by heaven.

*Marcellus.* *Let me ask you* Nor I, my lord 120

*Hamlet* How say you then, would heart of man once  
 think it?

But you'll be secret?

*Horatio* {  
*Marcellus.* { Ay, by heaven, my lord

*Hamlet.* There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark  
 But he's an arrant knave. *absolute scoundrel*

*Horatio* There needs no ghost my lord, come from the  
 grave, 125

To tell us this.

*Hamlet.* Why, right; you are i' the right;  
 And so without more circumstance at all

my watchword ; it is "farewell, remember me." I have sworn it.

*Horatio* } [*Within*] My lord, my lord !  
*Marcellus.* }

*Marcellus.* Lord Hamlet !

*Horatio.* May God protect him !

*Marcellus* So be it !

*Horatio.* Ho, ho, my lord !

*Hamlet.* Ho, ho, boy ! come, here I am.

*Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS.*

*Marcellus.* How is it with you, noble lord ?

*Horatio.* What news, my lord ?

*Hamlet* Oh, wonderful !

*Horatio* My good lord, tell us.

*Hamlet* No, you will not keep it a secret.

*Horatio* I swear I will keep it a secret, my lord.

*Marcellus* I too, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Let me ask you can the heart of man conceive it ? But you will keep it secret ?

*Horatio, Marcellus* Yes, by heaven.

(Page 50. Lines 101—122)

*Hamlet.* There is not a villain living in all Denmark, but he is the vilest scoundrel

*Horatio* It does not require a ghost to come out of the grave that it may tell us this thing

*Hamlet* Yes, you are quite right, and so without any further ado, I think it proper that we shake hands and part, you as your business and inclination may prompt you, for every man has business and inclination, whatever they may be, and as for myself, let me tell you that I shall go and pray.

I hold it fit that we shake hands and part :  
 You, as your business and desire shall point you,—  
 For every man hath business and desire,  
 Such as it is,—and for mine own poor part,  
 Look you, I'll go pray

*Confusion*  
*Horatio* These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

*Hamlet.* I am sorry they offend you, heartily,  
 Yes, faith, heartily.

*Horatio.* There's no offence, my lord 135

*Hamlet.* Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio,  
 And much offence, too. Touching this vision here,  
 It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you :  
 For your desire to know what is between us,  
 'O'ermaster 't as you may And now, good friends, 140  
 As you are friends, scholars, and soldiers,  
 Give me one poor request

*Horatio* What is 't, my lord? we will

*Hamlet.* Never make known what you have seen to night

*Horatio* { My lord, we will not  
*Marcellus* }

*Hamlet* Nay, but swear 't

*Horatio* In faith, 145

My lord, not I.

*Marcellus* Nor I, my lord, in faith.

*Hamlet* Upon my sword

*Marcellus* We have sworn, my lord, already.

*Hamlet.* Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

*Ghost* [Beneath] Swear

*Hamlet* At, ha, boy! say'st thou so? art thou there,  
 true penny? *honest fellow* 150

Come on,—you hear this fellow in the cellarage,—  
 Consent to swear.

*Horatio.* Propose the oath, my lord

*Hamlet* Never to speak of this that you have seen,  
 Swear by my sword.

*Ghost* [Beneath] Swear

*Hamlet.* Hic et ubique? then we'll *change* shift our ground. 155

*Horatio* These are but confusing words, my lord.

*Hamlet.* I am very sorry if they displease you. Really I am very sorry.

*Horatio.* We have not taken you amiss, my lord

*Hamlet.* Yes, I swear by saint Patrick that my words must give great offence. As regards this apparition, let me <sup>94</sup> assure you that it is a good spirit. As you are inquisitive to know what passed between us, you should suppress the desire as you can. And now, good friends, as you are friends, scholars, soldiers, grant me one humble request.

*Horatio.* What is it, my lord? We will keep your request

*Hamlet.* Do not please <sup>6</sup> tell anybody what you have seen to-night.

*Horatio, Marcellus.* We will not, my lord.

*Hamlet.* But you will swear it.

*Horatio* I swear I will not tell anybody, my lord.

*Marcellus* So do I, my lord.

*Hamlet* Swear upon my sword.

*Marcellus.* We have already sworn, my lord

(Page 50. Lines 123—147)

*Hamlet.* You must swear upon my sword.

*Ghost* [*Beneath*] Swear.

*Hamlet.* Ah, boy! You say too? Are you there, honest fellow? Come on—you hear this fellow underground—you must swear.

*Horatio.* Propose the oath, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Swear never to speak of what you have seen; swear by my sword.

*Ghost* [*Beneath*] Swear.

*Hamlet.* Here and everywhere? Then we must change our place. Come here, gentlemen, and lay your hands upon my sword, and swear that you will never say anything about what you have heard. Swear by my sword.

Come hither, gentlemen,  
And lay your hands again upon my sword.  
Never to speak of this that you have heard,  
Swear by my sword. 160

*Ghost* [Beneath] Swear

*Hamlet* Well said, old mole ' canst work ' the earth  
so fast?

A worthy pioner ! once more remove, good friends.

*Horatio* O <sup>Heaven</sup> day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

*Hamlet* And therefore as a stranger give it welcome 165  
There are more things in heaven and earth, *Horatio*, <sup>which</sup>  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy

But come,

Here, as before, never, <sup>God may</sup> so help you mercy,

How strange or odd so'er I hear myself, — 170

As I perchance hereafter shall think meet

To put an antic disposition on, —

That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,

With arms encumber'd thus, or this head shake, <sup>held</sup>

Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase, 175

As, 'Well, well we know,' or, 'We could, an if we would,'

Or, 'if we list to speak,' or, 'There be, an if they might,'

Or such ambiguous giving out, to note <sup>are</sup>

That you know aught of me. this not to do,

So grace and mercy at your most need help you,

Swear

180

*Ghost* [Beneath] Swear

[They swear

*Hamlet* Rest, rest, petrified spirit ! So gentlemen,

With all my love I do commend me to you, <sup>tender</sup>

And what so poor a man as Hamlet is

May do, to express his love and friending to you 185

God willing, shall not lack Let us go in

And still your fingers on your lips, I pray

The time is out of joint ; O curst spite,

That ever I was born to set it right !

Nay, come, let's go together.]

[Exeunt.

*Ghost* [*Beneath*] Swear.

*Hamlet*. Well done, my fellow. You can move about so fast in the earth? A good miner! Let us change place once more, my friends.

*Horatio*. O heavens! This is most strange.

*Hamlet*. Therefore treat it as something that does not concern you. There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than your philosophy can give you any notion of. But come, here swear again as before, so God may protect you no matter how strangely or oddly I behave, as I may perhaps think it proper to assume a quaint, fantastic disposition, that you, seeing me in such a mood, shall never, with your arms folded across your breast, or with a significant head-shake,

(Page 54 Lines 148—174)

or by speaking some ambiguous words as "Well, well, we know", or "We could if we would," or "If we care to speak," or "There are things as they might be," or anything of such ambiguous import, to show that you know anything of me. You must swear not to do this, and so God's mercy may help you in your greatest need.

*Ghost*. [*Beneath*] Swear.

*Hamlet*. Peace, unhappy spirit! [They swear.] So, gentle men, I tender all my love to you, and what Hamlet in his position may do to express his love and friendship to you, God permitting, will not be lacking. Let us go in together, but mind that you keep counsel with him, as I pray you. The time is abnormal and critical. It is my ill fate that I should have to mend it. Come, let us go together.



## ACT II

## Scene I. A ROOM IN POLONIUS' HOUSE

Enter POLONIUS and REYNALDO

Pol Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo

Reynaldo I will, my lord *will do it very*Pol. You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo.  
Before you visit him, to make inquiry  
Of his behaviourReynaldo *To be sure, that is all right* My lord, I did intend itPol *Marry, well said, very well said* Look you —  
Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris, *mom*  
And how, and who what means, and where they kee  
That company, at what expense, and finding  
By this encompassment and drift of question, *round*  
That they do know my son, come you more nearer  
Than your particular demands will touch it.  
Take you, as 'twere, some distant knowledge of him,  
As thus, 'I know his father, and his friends,  
And, in part him;' do you mark this, Reynaldo? 15

Reynaldo Ay, very well, my lord

Pol 'And, in part, him, but,' you may say, 'not well :  
But if 't be he I mean, he's very wild, *as you say*  
Addicted so and so,' and there put on him  
What forgeries you please; marry, none so rank 20  
As may dishonour him, take heed of that;  
But, sir, such waiton, *as you say* wild and usual slips  
As are companions noted and most known  
To youth and liberty.

Reynaldo.

As gaming, my lord?Pol Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling, *See*  
Drabbing, you may go so far. 26

Reynaldo My lord, that would dishonour him

Polonius Faith, no, as you may season it in the charge  
You must not put another scandal on him,  
That he is open to incontinency; *debauching* 30  
That's not my meaning, but breathe his fault so quaintly

## ACT II

## Scene I A ROOM IN POLONIUS' HOUSE

*Enter POLONIUS and REYNALDO**Polonius.* Give him this money and these letters, Reynaldo.*Reynaldo.* I shall, my lord*Polonius.* You will act very wisely, Reynaldo, to make inquiries as to how he is conducting himself before you see him*Reynaldo.* My lord, I intended doing the same

Page 56. Lines 175—195. Act II,

Scene I. Lines 1—5)

*Polonius.* To be sure, that's all right. Mind you, sir, first inquire what Danes are there in Paris, and who they, how they manage, and where they are putting up, what company they keep, and what expenses they run, and finding by this indirect means that they know my son, come nearer the subject we are interested in than your personal questions will elicit, pretend that you know but indifferently, saying "I know, his father and his friends, and partly him" Do you follow me, Reynaldo?*Reynaldo.* Yes, very well, my lord.*Polonius.* Yes, you will say "I know him partly, and you may add, "not well; if you mean, he is very fast addicted to such and such vices", and there you impute what invented vices you please, of course, not so gross as may dishonour him, be careful of that, but such sportful, extravagant and common transgressions as accompany youth and freedom.*Reynaldo.* As gambling, my lord.*Polonius.* Yes, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling—you may go this limit, but hint his vices so ingeniously that they may seem the outgrowth of liberty, the exuberance of an impetuous spirit, a wildness due to undisciplined passions, attacking usually a young man.*Reynaldo.* But, my good lord,—*Polonius.* Why should you follow this procedure?

(Page 56. Lines 6-31)

*Spots*

That they may seem the taints of liberty,  
 The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,  
 A savageness in unreclaimed blood, *indica*  
 Of general assault *on* *usually*

*Reynaldo.* *Why* But, my good lord,—

*Polonius* Wherefore should you do this?

*Reynaldo* *Why* Ay, my lord,

I would know that.

*Polonius* Marry, sir, here's my drift;  
 And I believe it is a fetch of warrant *advice*  
 You laying these slight sullies on my son, *because*  
 As 'twere a thing a little soil'd the working, *d* 40  
 Mark you,

Your party in converse, him you would sound,  
 Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes *ab*  
 The youth you breathe of guilty, be assur'd  
 He closes with you in this consequence 45  
 'Good sir,' or so; or 'friend,' or gentleman,  
 According to the phrase or the addition  
 Of man and country *I follow you*

*Reynaldo* *Very* Very good, my lord

*Polonius* And then, sir, does he this,—he does,—  
 What was I about to say? By the mass I was  
 About to say something where did I leave? 51

*Reynaldo* At 'closes in the consequence  
 At 'friend or so,' and 'gentleman'

*Polonius.* At 'closes in the consequence,' ay, marry,  
 He closes with you thus 'I know the gentleman, 55  
 I saw him yesterday, or t' other day,  
 Or then, or then, with such, or such, and, as you say  
 'There was he gaming, there o'took in 's rouse, *dr*  
 'There falling out at tennis,' or perchance,  
 'I saw him enter such a house of sale, *dr*  
 'A delicat, a brothel, or so forth. *fi* 60

See you now, *fi*  
Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth;  
And thus, do we of wisdom and of reach,

*Reynaldo.* Yes, my lord, I would like to know that.

*Polonius.* To be sure, sir, this is my point, and I believe it bids fair to succeed. You, laying these blemishes upon my son, as if they have become a little too common as they are practised, observe me, you should sound the gentleman to whom you talk, whether he has ever known, the young fellow to be guilty of the blemishes you mention, then be sure that he agrees with you and so addresses you as "Good sir, or so", or "gentleman", according as the form of the title goes in that country.

*Reynaldo.* I follow you, my lord.

*Polonius.* And then, sir, does he do this—he does—what was I going to say? By God, I was about to say something. Where did I stop?

*Reynaldo.* You said he agrees with you, and addresses you as "friend or so".

*Polonius.* Yes, that's right. He will remark this. "I know the gentleman; I saw him yesterday or the other day, either then or sometime after, in such and such company, and as you say, he was then or at another time he was too far gone in boozing, or started quarrelling at tennis". Or perhaps I saw him enter a house of ill fame. Do you see my point? By utilizing lies, you get hold of truth, and thus we, wise and understanding man,

(Page 58. Lines 31 51)

working in a round-about way and by indirect hints, secure true information. So by following my former discourse and advice you should find out the truth about my son. You have got me?

With windlasses, and with assays of bias,  
 By indirections find directions out  
 So by my former lecture and advice  
 Shall you my son You have me, have you not?

65

*Reynaldo* My lord, I have

*Polonius* God be wi' you, fare you well.

*Reynaldo* Good my lord! *let him* 70

*Polonius* Observe his inclination in yourself.

*Reynaldo* I shall, my lord

*Polonius* And let him ply his music

*Reynaldo*. Well, my lord

*Polonius* Farewell! *[Exit REYNALDO.]*

*Enter OPHELIA,*

How now, Ophelia! what's the matter?

*Ophelia* O! my lord, my lord, I have been so  
 affrighted! 75

*Polonius* With what, in the name of God?

*Ophelia* My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,  
 Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbrae'd, *upper*  
 Not hat upon his head, his stockings foul'd, *soiled*  
 Ungarter'd and down gyved to his ancle, *faller* 80  
 Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,  
 And with a look so piteous in purport ~~as if he had been loosed out of hell~~  
 As if he had been loosed out of hell *dear*  
 To speak of horrors, he comes before me

*Polonius* Mad for thy love?

*Ophelia*. My lord, I do not know; 85

But truly I do fear it

*Polonius* What said he?

*Ophelia*. He took me by the wrist and held me hard,  
 Then goes he to the length of all his arm;  
 And with his other hand thus o'er his brow  
 He falls to such perusal of my face *Critically* 90  
 As he would draw it Long stay'd he so,  
 At last, a little shaking of mine arm  
 And thrice his head thus waving up and down,  
 He rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound

- Reynaldo* I have, my lord.  
*Polonius* Good-bye then  
*Reynaldo* My good lord.  
*Polonius* Note his behaviour personally  
*Reynaldo.* I shall, my lord  
*Polonius* Let him, however, follow his own bent.  
*Reynaldo* Well, my lord.  
*Polonius* Farewell !

*Enter OPHELIA*

Well, Ophelia, what is the matter ?

*Ophelia.* Oh, my lord, I have been so frightened !

*Polonius* By what, in the name of God ?

*Ophelia.* My lord, as I was sewing in my room, Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbuttoned, no hat upon his head, his stockings soiled ungartered and hanging loose about his ankles, looking as pale as his shirt, his knees knocking together, and with a look dazed as if he had been let out of hell to speak of shuddering horrors, he appears before me.

*Polonius.* Mad for your love ?

*Ophelia.* My lord, I do not know, but really I fear his mood.

*Polonius* What did he say ?

(Page 60 Lines 59 80)

*Ophelia.* He took me by the wrist, and gripped me hard, and then he falls back all the length of his arm, and with his other hand laid across his temples, he began to study my face as if he would draw it. He stayed in this posture long ; at last when I shook my arm a little, he nodded his head up and down thrice and drew a deep sigh, so sad and plaintive, as if it seemed to convulse all his body and end his very life. Having done this, he released me ; and having turned his head over his shoulders, he seemed to find his way out without using his eyes, for actually he left the room without seeing us he kept his eyes bent all the time on me.

That it did seem to snatter all his bulk, 95  
 And end his being That done, he lets me go  
 And with his head over his shoulder turn'd,  
 He seem'd to had his way without his eyes,  
 For out o' doors he w-nt without their help,  
 And to the last bended their light on me. *fixed* 100

*Polonius* Come, go with me, I will go seek the king.  
 This is the very ecstasy of love, *madness*,  
 Whose violent property *fordoes* itself, *nature*  
 And leads the will to desperate undertakings,  
 As oft as any passion under heaven 105  
 That does afflict our natures I am sorry.

What, have you given him any hard words of late?"

*Ophelia*. No, my good lord, but, as you did command,  
 I did repel his letters and denied  
 His access to me *interviews*

*Polonius* That hath made him mad. 110  
 I am sorry that with better heed and judgment  
 I had not quoted him, I fear'd he did but trifle,  
 And meant to wreck thee, but, beshrew my jealousy  
 But heaven, it is as proper to our age *Curle*-  
 To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions, & 115  
 As it is common for the younger sort  
 To lack discretion Come, go we to the king.  
 This must be known, which, being kept close, might move  
 More grief to hide than hate to utter love  
 Come *dyspleasure* [Exeunt

*Scene II A ROOM IN THE CASTLE*

*Enter KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN,  
 and Attendants*

*King* Welcome, dear Rosenorantz and Guildenstern!  
 Moreover that we much did long to see you,  
 The need we have to use you did provoke  
 Our hasty sending. Something have you heard  
 Of Hamlet's transformation; so call it, *Ch* 5  
 Sth nor the exterior nor the inward man

*Polonius.* Come with me, I am going to the King. This is the very madness of love, whose violent fit leads to self-destruction, and drives the will to desperate deeds, as often as any human passion known on earth. I am sorry. Have you spoken rudely to him lately?

*Ophelia.* No my good lord, but as you commanded me, I refused his letters, and did not permit him to see me.

*Polonius.* This has driven him mad. I am sorry that I did not study him with more care and insight. I was afraid that he had no serious intention, and would have ruined you. Let my suspicion be cursed. It seems as likely that we in old age overshot the mark in making a wise decision as younger men lack wisdom.

(Page 60. Lines 81-110)

Come, let us go to the King. We must let him know this, and if it be kept secret now, it might prove greater sorrow to keep it so than the risk of the King's displeasure by making it known.

## *Scene II A ROOM IN THE CASTLE*

*Enter KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN,  
and Attendants.*

*King.* Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Over and above our desire to see you, we need your services which made us send for you hastily. You have heard something of the change that has come over Hamlet—I cannot describe it otherwise, since he is no more inwardly or outwardly what he was. I cannot imagine what else other than his father's death could have thus distracted him. I entreat you both that, having been brought up with him in your early days, and since you share his youth and taste, you may be pleased to stay here in our court for sometime, and so by giving him your company, entice him to pleasures, and find out, as you may by using your opportunity, whether anything, unknown to us, troubles him thus so that when it is known to us, we may find a remedy.



Resembles that it was What it should be,  
 More than his father's death, that thus hath put him  
 So much from the understanding of himself,  
 I cannot dream of I entreat you both, *to be earnest* 10  
 That, being of so young days brought up with him  
 And sith so neighbour'd to his youth and humour,  
 That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court *stay*  
 Some little time, so by your companies  
 To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather 15  
 So much as from occasion you may glean,  
 Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus,  
 That, open'd lies within our remedy *we may find*

*Queen* Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of you ;  
 And sure I am two men there are not living 20  
 The whom he more adheres. If it will please you  
 To show us so much gentry and good will  
 As to expend your time with us awhile,  
 For the supply and profit of our hope,  
 Your visitation shall receive such thanks 25  
 As fits a king's remembrance

*Rosencrantz.* Both your majesties  
 Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,  
 Put your dread pleasures more into command *mighty*  
 Than to entreaty

*Guildestern* But we both obey,  
 And here give up ourselves in the full bent, *Completely* 30  
 To lay our service freely at your feet,  
 To be commanded

*King.* Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildestern.

*Queen* Thanks, Guildestern and gentle Rosencrantz ;  
 And I beseech you instantly to visit *his request* 35  
 My too much changed son Go, some of you,  
 And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is

*Guil* Heaven's make our presence and our practices  
 Pleasant and helpful to him !

*Queen* Ay, amen ! *Be it so*

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and some Attendants.]

*Queen.* Good gentleman, he has talked of you much, and I am sure there are not two men living to whom he is more attached. If it may please you to be so courteous and gracious as to spend your time with us for a while that you may help us in our need,

(Page 62. Lines 111-114)

*Scene II. Lines 1 24)*

we shall be very grateful for your visit, and the King will thank you as it befits him.

*Rosencrantz.* Both your majesties by virtue of the supreme authority you have over us, might convert your will from entreaty into command.

*Guildenstern.* But we both obey you, and most willingly offer our services to be used as you please.

*King.* Thanks, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

*Queen.* Thanks, Guildenstern and Rosencrantz. And I entreat you immediately to see my much transformed son. Go, some of you, and conduct these gentlemen to where Hamlet is.

*Guildenstern.* My God make our company and services agreeable and beneficial to him.

*Queen.* Be it so!

*[Exeunt Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Attendants.]*

*Enter* POLONIUS

*Polonius* The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,  
Are joyfully return'd <sup>you have ever been bringer.</sup> 41

*King* Thou still hast been the father of good news

*Polonius* Have I, my lord? Assure you, my good liege,  
I hold my duty, as I hold my soul,

Both to my God and to my gracious king, 45

And I do think—or else this brain of mine

Hunts not the trail of policy so sure

As it hath us'd to do—that I have found

The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

*King.* O' speak of that that do I long to hear 50

*Polonius* Give first admittance to the ambassadors,  
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.

*King* Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in

[*Exit* POLONIUS.]

He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he hath found  
The head and source of all your son's distemper. 55

*Queen* I doubt it is no other but the main  
His father's death and our o'erhasty marriage

*King.* Well, as shall sift him, subject to

*Re-enter* POLONIUS, with VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS

Welcome, my good friends!

Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway?

*Voltimand.* Most fair return of greetings and desires 60  
Upon our first, he sent out to suppress

His nephew's levies, which to him appear'd

To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack,

But, better look'd into, he truly found

It was against your highness. whereat griev'd, 65

That so his sickness, age, and impotence

Was falsely borne in hand, sends out arrests

On Fortinbras, which he, in brief, obeys,

Receives rebuke from Norway, and, in fine,

Makes vow before his uncle never more 70

To give the assay of arms against your majesty. —

*Enter* POLONIUS.

*Polonius.* The ambassadors, who were sent to Norway, my good lord, have returned with happy news.

*King.* You have ever been bringer of good news.

*Polonius* Is that true, my lord? My good lord, let me tell you that I hold my duty and my soul in equal solemn consideration in relation to both my God and my gracious King, and I think, otherwise my brain is not so sure pursuing the policy, of state as it used to be, I have discovered the cause of Hamlet's madness

*King.* Do speak of that, I long to hear it.

(Page 65. Lines 25-50)

*Polonius* First let the ambassadors be admitted to your presence My news shall form the last item of that great feast.

*King* You may yourself do honour to them, and conduct them here.

[*Exit* POLONIUS.

He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he has discovered the main cause of your son's trouble.

*Queen.* I doubt whether it can be any other than his father's death and our marriage which followed too soon

*King.* Well, we shall sound him

*Re-enter* POLONIUS, with VOLTIMAND, and CORNELIUS.

Welcome, my good friends. Say, Voltimand, what message you bring from the King of Norway.

*Voltimand* Most fair greetings and good wishes. The first thing he did on receiving us, was to send out to stop his nephew's recruiting, the raising of troops appeared to him to be a preparation against the Poles, but on investigation he found that it was against your majesty. He was very sorry that advantage was taken of his sickness, old age, and feebleness, and ordered the arrest of Fortinbras, and he submitted. He was rebuked by his uncle and finally took a vow that he would never again make any warlike preparation against your majesty. Pleased with this, the King of Norway offered him an annual pension of three thousand crowns, and gave him permission to use the troops he had raised against the Poles—and he makes this request to you that

Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,  
 Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee,  
 And his commission to employ those soldiers,  
 So levied as before, against the Polack ; 75  
 With an entreaty, herein further shown, [*Giving a paper*  
 That it might please you to give quiet pass  
 Through your dominions for this enterpris  
 On such regards of safety and allowance  
 As therein are set down

*King* It likes us well, 80  
 And at our more consider'd time we'll read.  
 Answer, and think upon this business :  
 Meantime we thank you for your well took labour  
 Go to your rest ; at night we'll feast together .

Most welcome home. [*Exeunt VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS.*

*Polonius.* This business is well ended. 85  
 My liege, and madam, to expostulate ~~discuss~~  
 What majesty should be, what duty is,  
 Why day is day, night night, and time is time,  
 Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time  
 Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit, 90  
~~Verbal is a business expression and mere show of~~  
 And tediousness the limbs and outward flourish,  
 I will be brief Your noble son is mad :  
 Mad call I it, for, to define true madness,  
 What is 't but to be nothing else but mad ?  
 But let that go

*Queen,* More matter, with less art 95  
*Polonius* Madam, I swear I use no art at all,  
 That he is mad, 'tis true, 'tis true 'tis pity ;  
 And pity 'tis 'tis true a foolish figure, ~~term~~  
 But farewell it, for I will use no art  
 Mad let us grant him, then ; and now remain 100  
 That we find out the cause of this effect,  
 Or rather say, the cause of this defect,  
 For this effect defective comes by cause,  
 Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.  
Perpend.

it might please you to give him free passage through your territory,

[*Gives a Paper,*

(Page 66 Lines 51-76)

for this invasion on such terms of safety and permission as stated.

*King.* It pleases me well, and we shall read it at a time when we can give more attention to it, and give proper answer. Let me now thank you for the labour undertaken with such good results. You may rest now; at night we shall have a feast. I welcome you home heartily.

[*Exeunt Voltimand and Cornelius.*

*Polonius.* This business is happily concluded. My lord, and madam, it is but a waste of time to discuss what royalty should be, what duty is, why day is day, night is night and time is time. Therefore, since to state things briefly and pointedly is the very essence of wit, and verbosity is the ponderous expression and mere show of wit, I shall be brief. Your noble son is mad, I cannot say anything else than mad. If madness is to be defined, it can mean nothing else than being mad. But enough of that.

*Queen.* Let us have more sense than your artifice.

*Polonius.* Madam, I swear, I use no artifice at all. That he is mad, it is true, it is true it is a pity and it is a pity it is true. It is a foolish term of speech. But no more of it, for I will use no artifice. Let us grant then that he is mad, now it is for us to find out the cause of this effect, or rather the cause of this defect, for the effect, that is deplorable, there must be cause. This is the position, and it follows thus. Weigh it carefully. I have a daughter—so long as she continues to be mine—

(Page 68 Lines 77-106.)

who, in obedience to her sense of duty, has given me this: Now you can draw your conclusion, as I read it (Reads)

I have a daughter, have while she is mine,  
 Who, in her duty and obedience, mark,  
 Hath given me this now, gather, and surmise  
*W. To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified*  
 Ophelia — *lady crown* *256*

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase, 'beautified' is a vile  
 phrase, but you shall hear Thus

In her excellent white bosom, these, &c.—

Queen Came this from Hamlet to her?

Polonius Good madam stay awhile, I will be faithful

Doubt thou the stars are fire, 115

Doubt that the sun doth move,

Doubt truth to be a liar,

But never doubt I love,

O dear Ophelia! I am ill at these numbers I have not  
*not skilled*  
 art to reckon my groans, but that I love thee best, O most  
 best! believe it. Adieu

Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this  
 machine is to him,

Hamlet.

This in obedience hath my daughter shown me. 125

And more above, hath his solicitations, *5-11*

As they fell out by time, by means, and place, O

All given to mine ear.

King

But how hath she

Receiv'd his love?

Polonius

What do you think of me?

King

As of a man faithful and honourable 130

Pol

I would fain prove so But what might you think, 131

When I had seen this hot love on the wing, *131, 132*

As I perceiv'd it (I must tell you that)

Before my daughter told me,—what might you,

Or my dear majesty, your queen here, think, 135

If I had play'd the desk or table book,

Or given my heart a winking mute and dumb

Or look'd upon this love with idle sight,

"To the celestial and my soul's idol the most beautified Ophelia", that is a badly chosen phrase, I cannot stand it, "beautiful" is rotten word; but you should hear the rest Thus: (Reads) "In her excellent white bosom these", etc.

*Queen.* Did this letter come from Hamlet to her?

*Polonius.* Good madam, have patience. I shall discharge my duty faithfully.

(Reads.)

"You may as well doubt that the stars are fire, or the sun moves or that the truth is a lie, but never doubt that I love you. O dear Ophelia, I am hile good in versifying. I have no skill how to express my sighs and groans in verse, but there can be no doubt that I love you best O most excellent, believe it. Farewell.

Yours evermore, while he draws his breath on earth,  
Hamlet".

This has been shown me by my daughter dutifully; she has also let me know of the whole course of his courtship, with all the details of time and the means he adopted and place.

*King.* And has she responded to his love.

*Polonius.* What is your opinion of me?

*King.* As of a man who is loyal and has a sense of honour.

*Polonius.* I would like to prove so Let me ask what you might have thought, ay, when I had seen this violent love in progress, as I observed it, suppose if I had acted as a silent and active intermediary between them,

(Page 70. Lines 107—136)

or connived at it, or taken no serious notice of it, what might you have thought of me? No. I at once got busy about it



What might you think? No, I went round to work,  
 And my young mistress thus I did bespeak 140  
 'Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star.  
 This must not be.' and then I prescripts gave  
 That she should lock herself from his resort,  
 Admit no messengers, receive no tokens  
 Which done, she took the fruits of my advice, 145  
 And he, repulsed, — a short tale to make, ~~time~~  
 Fell into a sadness, then into a fast, ~~time~~  
 Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,  
 Thence to a lightness, and by this declension  
 Into the madness wherein now he raves, 0  
 And all we mourn for

*King* Do you think 'tis this?

*Queen* It may be, very like

*Polonius* Hath there been such a time, — I'd fain know  
 that, —

That I have positively said, ' 'Tis so,'

When it prov'd otherwise?

*King* Not that I know 155

*Polonius* Take this from this, if this be otherwise

[*Pointing to his head and shoulder*

If circumstances lead me, I will find

Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed

Within the centre

*King.* How may we try it further?

*Pol* You know sometimes he walks four hours together  
 Here in the lobby

*Queen* So he does indeed 161

*Polonius* At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him,  
 Be you and I behind an  arras  then, ~~Curtain~~  
 Mark the  encounter ; if he love her not.

And be not from his  reason  fallen thereon 165

Let me be no assistant for a state,

But keep a farm, and carters

*King.*

We will try it

and I spoke thus to my young lady, "Lord Hamlet is a prince, far above your station in life. It cannot go on—" And then, I gave her advice that she must not let her be seen by Hamlet, nor receive any messages or gifts of love from him. She acted upon my advice, and he being rejected to make the story short sank into melancholy, then into a fast, and then he began to keep awake, and grow weak and light-headed, and by all this gradation, he fell into madness, which makes him shout and bluster, and which we all mourn.

*King* Do you think it is so?

*Queen.* It may be quite likely

*Polonius* Has there been ever a time, I should like to know it—that I have positively said, "it is so," when it had turned out to be otherwise?

*King* I do not know any such occasion,

*Polonius.* (Pointing to his head and shoulder) You may remove my head from my shoulder, if what I say, proves to be other than what it is. If circumstantial evidence is forthcoming, I will find where the truth is hidden, though it were hidden within the centre of the earth

*King* How may we get to the bottom of it?

*Polonius* You know that sometimes he walks for four hours remaining in the lobby here.

(Pages 72 Lines 137—160)

*Queen* That he does, indeed.

*Polonius.* At such a time I shall set my daughter on to him. Let us watch from behind the curtain, and note how it goes on. If he is not in love with her, and if he has not gone mad for love, let me no more be a minister to a state, but keep farm and own carts.

*King.* We shall try this plan.

*Queen* But look, where sadly the poor wretch comes  
reading

*Polonius* Away! I do beseech you, both away  
I'll board him presently *Kuch*

[*Exeunt KING, QUEEN, and Attendants*  
*Enter HAMLET, reading.*

O' give me leave. 170

How does my good Lord Hamlet -

*Hamlet* Well, Good a-mercy.

*Polonius* Do you know me, my lord?

*Hamlet.* Excellent well, you are a fishmonger.

*Polonius* Not I, my lord 175

*Hamlet* Then I would you were so honest a man

*Polonius.* Honest my lord!

*Hamlet* Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to  
be one man picked out of ten thousand

*Polonius* That's very true, my lord *WAW* 180

*Hamlet* For it the sun breed maggots in a dead dog,  
being a good kissing carrion.—Have you a daughter

*Polonius* I have my lord *Freedom under*

*Hamlet* Let her not walk i' the sun: conception is a  
blessing; but as your daughter my conceive, friend look  
on't *What do you think of that*

*Polonius* [*Aside*] How say you by that? Still harp 186  
on my daughter yet he knew me not at first; he  
said I was a fishmonger. he is far gone, for gone: and  
truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love;  
very near this I'll speak to him again. What do you 190  
read my lord?

*Hamlet* Words words words

*Polonius* What is the matter, my lord?

*Hamlet* Between who?

*Polonius* I mean the matter that you read, my lord 195

*Hamlet* Slanders, sir for the satirical rogue says  
here that old men have gray beards, that their faces  
are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and  
plum-tree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of

*Queen.* But, behold here comes the unhappy youth,  
reading

*Polonius* Both of you withdraw quickly I will tackle  
him presently.

(*Exeunt KING, QUEEN, and ATTENDANTS*)

*Enter HAMLET, reading.*

May I ask, how are you getting on, my good lord?

*Hamlet.* Well, thanks to God

*Polonius.* Do you know me, my lord?

*Hamlet* Very well, you are a fish-seller

*Polonius.* No, no my lord

*Hamlet* Then I wish you were as honest a man.

*Polonius* You mean honest, my lord,

*Hamlet* Yes, sir it is not so easy to be honest as you  
think; only one man out of ten thousand is honest

*Polonius* That is true, my lord.

*Hamlet.* If the sun breeds worms in the dead body of a  
dog it being carcass good to be kissed-well, have you a  
daughter?

*Polonius.* I have, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Let her not walk in the sun Be careful about  
that

*Polonius* (*Aside*) What do you think of it? My daughter  
still running in his head. Yet he could not recognise me at  
first;

(Page 74 Lines 161—186.)

he said I was a fish-seller it is too bad with him; and really  
in my youth I suffered a lot for love; I came very near to  
this point Let me speak to him again. What do you read,  
my lord?

*Hamlet.* Mere words, and nothing else.

*Polonius.* What is the matter (substance or thought), my  
lord?

*Hamlet.* Between whom?

*Polonius,* I mean the matter you read, my lord.

*Hamlet.* It is all slanderous gossip, sir, for the satirist  
who is a knavish fellow, says here that old men have grey  
beards, wrinkled faces, rheumy eyes; and that they have no

*Guildenstern.* Faith, her ~~privates~~ we. 235  
*Hamlet* In the secret parts of Fortune? O 'most true,  
 she is a strumpet. What news?

*Ros.* None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest

*Hamlet* Then is doom-day near, but your news is not true. Let me question more in particular what have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither? 242

*Guildenstern.* Prison, my lord!

*Hamlet* Denmark's a prison

*Rosencrantz.* Then is the world one 246

*Hamlet* A goodly one, in which there are many cour-  
 tues, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the  
 worst. *Monarchically*

*Rosencrantz.* We think not so, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Why, then, 'tis none to you, for there is noth-  
 ing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so. to me  
 it is a prison

*Rosencrantz.* Why, then, your ambition makes it one,  
 'tis too narrow for your mind. *you are to amuse her* 251

*Hamlet* O God! I could be bounded in a nutshell, and  
 count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I  
 have had dreams. 256

*Guildenstern.* Which dreams, indeed, are ambition, for  
 the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow  
 of a dream. *reducing*

*Hamlet* A dream itself is but a shadow. *ambition* 260

*Rosencrantz.* Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and  
light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow.

*Hamlet* Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs  
 and out-stretched heroes the beggar's shadows. Shall we to  
 the court? for, by my say, I cannot reason. *faith* 265

*Rosencrantz.* { *attend*  
*Guildenstern.* { We'll wait upon you.

*Hamlet* No such matter, I will not sort you with the  
 rest of my servants, for, to speak to you like an honest  
*Class.*

*Rosencrantz.* No news but that the world has grown honest.

*Hamlet.* Then is the judgement day near, but I do not think that your news is true. Let me question you more minutely. What have you done that fortune sends you to prison here?

*Guildenstern.* Prison, my lord!

*Hamlet.* Denmark is a prison.

*Rosencrantz.* Then the world is also a prison.

*Hamlet.* The world is a specious prison in which there are many cells and places of confinement, Denmark being one of the worst.

*Rosencrantz.* We do not think so, my lord.

*Hamlet.* So it is no prison to you for there is nothing either good or bad unless you think it to be either good or bad, to me it is a prison.

*Rosencrantz.* Perhaps you are too ambitious, and Denmark does not satisfy your mind.

(Page 76 Lines 217—246)

*Hamlet.* What an idea! Let me be confined in a nutshell, and I shall think myself to be a king of boundless space, if not for some bad dreams that lately afflicted me.

*Guildenstern.* Those dreams are indeed ambition, for what the ambitious seek is but a shadow.

*Hamlet.* A dream itself is a shadow.

*Rosencrantz.* Indeed, and I hold ambition to be so unsubstantial that it is a shadow's shadow.

*Hamlet.* Then the beggars are bodies, and Kings and full-statured heroes are the shadows of the beggars. Shall we go to the court, for, indeed, I can no more argue.

*Rosencrantz, Guildenstern.* We shall attend on you.

*Hamlet.* I do not want it. I shall not put you in the category of servants, for, to be frank with you, I am attended

man, I am most dreadfully attended. But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore? 270

Rosencrantz, To visit you, my lord, no other occasion

Hamlet. Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks, but I thank you and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a halfpenny. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, come, deal justly with me. come, come, nay, speak 276

Guildenstern What should we say, my lord?

Hamlet Why anything, but to the purpose. You were sent for, and there is a kind of confession in your looks which your modesties have not craft enough to colour. I know the good king and queen have sent for you. 281

Rosencrantz To what end my lord?

Hamlet That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a <sup>proper circumstance</sup> proposer could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for or no! 286

Rosencrantz [Aside to GUILDENSTERN] What say you?

Hamlet, [Aside] Nay, then, I have an eye of you. I you love me, hold not off. <sup>I am watching you</sup> 29

Guildenstern My lord, we were sent for.

Hamlet I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the king and queen moult no feather. I have of late, ~ but therefore I know not, ~ lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form, in moving, how express and admir- 30.

power and capacity

active

by dreadful thoughts But let me ask you in the name of friendship—what are you doing here at Elsinore ?

*Rosencrantz.* We have come to see you, my lord, there is no other purpose.

*Hamlet.* A pauper as I am, I can but inadequately thank you ; all the same I thank you, but, my dear friends, however of little value my thanks may be, I hold it a little too dear. Were you not sent for ? Is it of your own free will that you have come ? Is it a voluntary visit ? Come, tell me honestly, do not hesitate, speak out

*Guildestern.* What should we say, my lord ?

*Hamlet.* Why, you can say anything, but it must be to the point You were sent for ; your very looks say it, which you have not learnt yet to be crafty enough to mask I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

*Rosencrantz.* For what purpose, my lord ?

*Hamlet.* That you may guide me But let me implore you, by the claim of our friendship, by our nearness in age,

(Page 78. Lines 247—277

by the ties of our cherished love and by what higher appeal one could make to you, be frank and straightforward with me, tell me whether you were sent for or not.

*Rosencrantz.* } [*Aside to Guildestern*] What do you say ?

*Hamlet.* [*Aside*] I am watching you If you love me do not conceal the truth from me.

*Guildestern.* My lord, we were sent for.

*Hamlet.* I will tell you the reason, so what I tell you beforehand will leave you nothing to discover, and your promise of secrecy to the king and queen remains unimpaired I have lately—but why I do not know—lost my gaiety, given up all customary exercises, and it has so badly affected my temperament that this fair framework, the earth, seems to me a barren land ; this lonely vault, the air, mark me, this splendid sky, hanging overhead, this stately roof in wrought with stars, it seems to me to be an assemblage of sinking and noxious



able 'in action how like an angel' in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world 'the paragon of animals' And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me, no, nor woman neither, though, by your smiling, you seem to say so. 310

*Rosencrantz* My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts

*Hamlet* Why did you laugh then, when I said, 'man delights not me'?

*Rosencrantz* To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you we coted them on the way, and hither are they coming, to offer you service

*Hamlet* He that plays the King shall be welcome; his majesty shall have tribute of me; the adventurous Knight shall use his foi and target, the Lover shall not sigh gratis; the Humorous Man shall end his part in peace; the Clown shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickle o' the sere; and the Lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt fort't What 325 players are they?

*Rosencrantz* Even those you were wont to take delight in, the tragedians of the city

*Hamlet* How chanceth it they travel? their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways 330

*Rosencrantz* I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation ~~or~~ *stephane*

*Hamlet* Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? Are they so followed?

*Rosencrantz*. No, indeed they are not 335

*Hamlet* How comes it? Do they grow rusty? *Careless*

*Rosencrantz*. Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace but there is, sir, an aery of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for't. these are now the 340 fashion, and so berattle the common stages,—so they

*Players*

vapours What an admirable creature is man ! How gifted in reason , of what boundless powers and capacities ! How expressive and wonderful in appearance and movement ! in action how like an angel, and how like a god in understanding ! He is the beauty of the world—the peerless of all animals ! And yet to me he is no more than a speck of dust. Man does not delight me nor woman either, though by your smiling you imply otherwise.

*Rosencrantz.* There was no such idea in mind.

*Hamlet.* Why did you laugh then when I said "man does not delight me"?

*Rosencrantz.* To think, my lord, if you do not delight

(Page 82. Lines 278—305)

in man, what little amusement can the players offer you We met them on the way ; and they are coming here to entertain you.

*Hamlet.* He who plays the king, shall be welcome, his majesty shall have my homage, the knight who goes out in search of adventure, shall use his sword and shield ; the lover who sighs, will not go without his reward, the man of humour shall end his part peacefully ; the clown shall make those laugh who are easily excitable to laughter, the lady shall say her say, or the declamation may abruptly come to an end. What kind of players are they ?

*Rosencrantz.* Even those in whom you used to take delight—the tragedians of the city

*Hamlet.* How does it happen that they are on a roving commission ? They were well settled in reputation, and paid their way.

*Rosencrantz.* The late craze has stopped them playing in the city.

*Hamlet.* Are they still held in the same esteem in the city as they were before ? Are they still as popular ?

*Rosencrantz.* They are not indeed.

*Hamlet.* How is it ? Are they growing out of favour ?

*Rosencrantz.* They have not slacked in their efforts to please the public, but there is, sir, a company of boy-players, who shout in their treble tone, and are very highly applauded.

stages,

call them,—that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose quills, and dare scarce come thither.

*Hamlet* What 'are they children? who maintains 'em? how are they escoted? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players,—as it is most like, if their means are not better,—their writers do them wrong, to make them exclaim against their own succession? Controversy 35

*Rosencrantz* Faith, there has been much to-do on both sides and the nation holds it no sin to tarré them to controversy. there was, for a while, no money bid for argument unless the Poet and the Player went to cuifs in the question

*Hamlet* Is it possible? death will be Controversy 36

*Guildestern* O! there has been much throwing about of brains So many brains have been engaged in

*Hamlet* Do the boys carry it away? Dishes

*Rosencrantz* Ay, that they do. my lord; Hercules and his load too 35

*Hamlet* It is not very strange, for my uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mows at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats a piece for his picture in little 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out

*un natural*

*[Flourish of trumpets within]*

*Guildestern* There are the players 365

*Hamlet* Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore your hands, come then, the appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony: let me comply with you in this garb, lest my extent to the players—which, I tell you, must show fairly outward—should more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome; but my uncle-father and aunt mother are deceived 370

*Guildestern* In what, my dear lord?

*Hamlet*, I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw. 375

as they call them—that many gallants are afraid of encountering the critics, and dare not come to the common stages.

*Hamlet* Are they boy-players? Who maintains them?

(Page 82 Lines 306 333).

How are they paid? Will they pursue the profession no longer than they can sing? Will they not regret afterwards, if they should become professional players—as it is most likely if they are compelled by their poverty—that those are wrong in encouraging them to denounce the common players to whose position they are to succeed.

*Rosencrantz*. Indeed both sides are to blame, and the people take pleasure in inciting one against the other; and for a time, the theatrical managers would pay nothing, for a play unless it had something to do with the dispute between the poet and the players.

*Hamlet* Is it so?

*Guildenstern* So many brains have been engaged in the dispute

*Hamlet*. Do the boys have the best of it?

*Rosencrantz*. Yes, my lord; they carry everything before them.

*Hamlet* It is not very strange, for my uncle is King of Denmark and those who made faces at him while my father was alive pay forty, fifty, even a hundred ducats for one of his pictures in miniature. By God, there must be something unnatural about it, if reason could discover it.

[*Flourish of trumpets within*]

*Guildenstern* Those are the players

*Hamlet* Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Let me shake hands with you, the attribute of welcome is etiquette. Let me follow the fashion of the day in this manner (by shaking hands, lest my show of courtesy which, I tell you, must be fairly manifest, might appear as more favourable reception to them than to you. You are welcome; but let me tell you that my uncle father and aunt mother are mistaken about me.

*Guildenstern* In what respect, my lord?

(Page 84 Lines 334-361)

*Hamlet* I am just touched with madness, but in my saner moment. I can distinguish a hawk from a handsaw.

Enter POLONIUS.

Polonius Well be with you, gentlemen !

Hamlet Hark you, Guildenstern, and you too, at each ear a hearer that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clouts ~~wrapping clothes~~ 374

Rosencrantz Happily he's the second time come to them, for they say an old man is twice a child.

Hamlet I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players, mark it You say right, sir, o' Monday morning, 'twas so indeed

Polonius My lord, I have news to tell you 395

Hamlet My lord, I have news to tell you When Roscius was an actor in Rome,—

Polonius The actors are come hither, my lord.

Hamlet Buz, buz ! ~~non sense~~.

Polonius Upon my honour,— 400

Hamlet Then came each actor on his ass,—

Polonius The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical historical, tragical comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlim ted • Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men

Hamlet O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a daughter treasure hadst thou ! 400

Polonius What a treasure had he, my lord •

Hamlet Why

One fair daughter and no more,  
The which he loved passing well.

Polonius [Aside.] Still on my daughter 405

Hamlet Am I not i' the right, old Jephthah ?

Polonius If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

Hamlet Nay, that follows not

Polonius What follows, then, my lord ? 410

Hamlet Why,

*Enter* POLONIUS

*Polonius* Welcome, gentleman.

*Hamlet* Listen, you, Guildenstern, and you too, one at each ear. That great baby you see there has not yet outgrown his infant-clothes.

*Rosencrantz.* Perhaps he has come to second childhood ; for it is said that an old man is again a child.

*Hamlet* I foretell that he comes to tell me of the players. You will see. You are right, sir ; on Monday morning, it was so indeed.

*Polonius* My lord, I have news to tell you.

*Hamlet* My lord I have news to tell you. When *Roscius* was an actor in *Rome*.—

*Polonius* The actors have come here, my lord.

*Hamlet* Tut, tut !

*Polonius* Upon my honour.—

*Hamlet* Then come each actor on an ass.

*Polonius.* They are best actors in the world, whether for tragedy or for comedy or for the historical play, or for a pastoral play, or for a combination of different sorts, or for a type of classical play, or a romantic play. Whether for a classical play (in which unities are observed) or for a romantic play (in which large freedom is permitted), they are the best men

*Hamlet* O Jephthah judge of Israel, what a treasure had you !

*Polonius.* What treasure had he, my lord ?

(Page 86 Lines 362-387).

*Hamlet.* Why, one fair daughter and nothing else, and he loved his daughter very much.

*Polonius* [*Aside*] Still harping on my daughter

*Hamlet.* Am I not right, old Jephthah ?

*Polonius.* If you call me Jephthah, my lord, it is true I have a daughter whom I love passing well.

*Hamlet* That does not follow.

*Polonius* What follows then, my lord ?

*Hamlet.* Why, as by lot, God knows, then you ought to know the next line—"it came to pass, as most likely it was"

*As by lot, God wot,*

And then, you know,

*It came to pass, as most like it was —*

The first row of the pious chanson will show you more;  
for look where my abridgment comes *cut short* 416

*Enter four or five Players.*

You are welcome, masters, welcome, all. I am glad to  
see thee well welcome, good friends, O, my old friend!  
Why, thy face is valance! since I saw thee last comest  
thou to beard me in Denmark? What! my young 420  
lady and mistress! By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer  
heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a  
chopine Pray God, your voice, like a piece of uncur-  
rent gold, be not cracked within the ring Masters,  
you are all welcome We'll e'en to't like French 425  
falconers, fly at anything we see. we'll have a speech  
straight Come, give us a taste of your quality, come,  
a passionate speech

*First Player* What speech, my good lord?

*Hamlet* I heard thee speak me a speech once, 430  
but it was never acted; or, if it was, not above once;  
for the play, I remember, pleased not the million;  
'twas caviare to the general. but it was—I received it,  
and others, whose judgments in such matters cried in,  
the top of mine—an excellent play, well digested in  
the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cun-  
ning / I remember one said there were no sallets in the  
lines to make the matter savoury, nor no matter in the  
phrase that might indict the author of affectation: but  
called it an honest method, as <sup>as a fine as a</sup> wholesome as sweet,  
and by very much more handsome than fine One  
speech in it (chiefly loved; 'twas Æneas' tale to Dido;  
and thereabout of it especially, where he speaks of  
Priam's slaughter If it live in your memory, begin at  
this line: let me see, let me see — 445

*The fugged Pyrrhus, like the Hircanian beast,—*

'tis not so, it begins with Pyrrhus —

The first few verses of the pious song will give you their rest.  
Now my speech is cut short, and you see why.

*Enter FOUR or FIVE Players.*

You are welcome, gentlemen, welcome, all of you, I am glad to see you so well. Welcome, good friends, O my old friend, your face is bearded since I saw you last. Do you come to comfort me with your beard in Denmark? What, my young lady and mistress, by our lady (Mary) you have grown taller since I saw you last, by the addition of high-sol'd shoes. Let me hope that your voice is not broken like a gold coin with a crack across. Gentlemen, you are all welcome. Like French falconer who will let fly their birds at any living creature in air, we shall have straightway a speech from you, show your skill to us, let us have a passionate speech.

*First Player.* What speech, my lord?

*Hamlet* I heard you recite a speech once, but it was never acted on the stage; or if it was, not more than once

(Page 86. Lines 390-417)

for the play did not prove to be popular, it was not to the taste of the play goers. But it was—as my impression goes, and that of others whose judgement was superior to mine—an admirable play, well arranged in scenes, marked as much by moderation as by skill. I remember, one said there was no spice of slander in the lines to give relish to the thought, nor had it any thought, the expression of which might convict the author of affectation, but described it as an honest method, as sound as charming, and much more lovely than elegant I loved chiefly one speech in it. it was Aeneas' tale to Dido; and I love that part of it in which Priam's slaughter is described. If you remember it, begin at this line, let me recall it, The rugged Pyrrhus, like the Hyrcanian beast—I do not



The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arm  
Black as his purpose did the night resemb'l  
When he lay couched in the ominous horse,  
Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd!  
With heraldry more dismal, head to foot <sup>Cruel</sup>  
Now is he tota' gules, horribly trick'd <sup>Comple</sup>  
With blood of fathers, mothers daughters, sons,  
Bak'd and impasted with the barching streets, <sup>dry</sup>  
That lend a tyrannous and damned light  
To their vile murders roisted in wrath and fire, <sup>U</sup>  
And th is o'er sized with conglute gore. <sup>Blood</sup>  
With eyes like carbuncles the hellish Pyrrhus a st  
Old grandsire Priam seeks

So proceed you

Polonius 'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good  
accent and good discretion <sup>Sobriety</sup>

First Player <sup>Aroz</sup> he finds him  
Striking too short at Greeks, his antique sword  
Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,  
Repugnant to command Unequal match'd <sup>refuses</sup>  
Pyrrhus at Priam drives, in rage strikes wide:  
But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword <sup>them</sup>  
The unnerv'd father falls Then senseless <sup>flung</sup>  
Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top <sup>went</sup>  
Droops to his base and with a hideous crash <sup>then</sup>

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Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear: for to his sword,  
Which was declining on the milky head  
Of reverend Priam seem'd i' the air to stick  
So as a printed tyrant, Pyrrhus stood, <sup>statue</sup>  
And like a neutral to his will and matter,  
Did nothing

475

But, as we often see, against some storm,  
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,  
The bold winds speechless and the orb below e  
As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder  
Do h rend the region; so, after Pyrrhus' pause,  
Aroused vengeance sets him new a work;  
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall  
On Vars's armour, forg'd for proof eterne,  
With less remorse than Pyrrhus bleeding sword  
Now falls on Priam

480

485

think the line runs thus—it begins with Pyrrhus. The fierce Pyrrhus, whose black armour, as dark as his purpose, resembled the night, when he lay hidden in the wooden horse, so fateful to try, has now darkened his dreaded and black complexion with a darker hue. He was now bloody red from head to foot, horribly stained with the blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons—the blood that had formed clots and crusts in the heat of the sun as he walked the streets. This lit up their lord's murder in a weird light consumed in the flame of anger, and thus covered with clotted blood,

(Page 33. Lines 418-445)

with eyes shining like carbuncles, the wicked Pyrrhus sought the old grandfather Pyrrhus." So you may go on

*Polonius* My lord, the speech has been excellently delivered with precise accent and sobriety.

*First Player.* Soon he found Priam, who missed his strokes at the Greeks, the old-fashioned sword which he wields with difficulty, lay where it fell, refusing to obey his command. Pyrrhus, superior in strength, charged Priam, struck blindly in his rage, and with the gust of wind, caused by the movement of the sword, eyes shining like carbuncles, the wicked Pyrrhus laid low the feeble Priam. Then Troy, though feelingless, yet seeming to feel the stroke that laid Priam low, went up in a flame, and collapsed with a shattering groan, which arrested Pyrrhus' attention, for, behold, his sword, which was ready to fall on the white haired head of reverend Priam, seemed to be suspended in the air, so, like the figure of a tyrant painted on a tapestry, Pyrrhus stood still, and like one, detached from his will and purpose, he did nothing. But, as it often happens, when a storm is about break, it is provided by a lull, a mass of clouds motionless, the noisy winds dumb, the earth as silent as death, and soon the thunder-storm bursts, and a crashing sound fills the sky, so, after pausing a while, the desire of vengeance kindled in his heart, and gave motion to his limbs. His blood-stained sword now fell with less pity on Priam than the hammer of cyclops fall on Mars' armour, made to resist all strokes. Let fortune be cursed, let all the gods, assembling together, deprive her of her power ;

(Page 90 Lines 445-474).

Out, out, thou strumpet, Fortune! All you gods,  
In general synod, take away her power, Council  
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel pair  
And bowl the round uave down the hill of heaven,  
As low as to the fiends! Hub hell

Polonius This is too long

Hamlet It shall to the barber's with your beard  
Prithee, say on he's for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or he  
sleeps Say on, come to flatter immoral 496

First Player But who, O! who had seen the mobled queen—

Hamlet The mobl'd queen?"

Polonius That's good, 'mobled queen' is good

First Player Run barefoot up and down, threat'ning the  
flames blinding tears a piece of rag 500

With bisson rhetum, a clout upon that head

Where late the diadem stood, and, for a robe

About her lank and all o'er teemed louns, let

A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up,

Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep'd,

'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounc'd

But if the gods themselves did see her then,

When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport

In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,

The instant burst of clamour that she made— cry of grief 0

Unless things mortal move them not at all— God

Would have made much the burning eyes of heaven, tearful

And passion in the gods Sympathy

Polonius Look! wh'er he has not turned his colour  
and has tears in 's eyes Prithee no more 516

Hamlet 'Tis well, I'll have thee speak out the rest  
soon. Good my lord, will you see the players well  
bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well treated, for  
they are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time—  
after your death you were better have a bad epitaph 520  
than their ill report while you live Satire merit

Pol My lord, I will use them according to their desert

Hamlet God's bodikins, man, much better, use every  
man after his desert, and who shall 'scape whipping? Use  
them after your own honour and dignity: the less they  
deserve, the more merit is in your bounty Take them in

demolish the wheel which she carries, and roll the broken frame of the wheel down the slope of heaven as low as the region of hell.

*Polonius.* This is too long.

*Hamlet.* It should be sent to the barber to cut it short. Please go on. All that he can appreciate is a bawdy song or tale, or he will sleep, go on, come to Hecuba.

*First Player.* "But who had seen the muffled queen—"

*Hamlet.* "The muffled queen?" ~~run down~~

*Polonius.* That's all right, "muffled queen" is quite good

*First Player.* "Run barefoot up and down, defying the flames with blinding tears, a piece of rag on her head that lately wore a crown, and a blanket about her lean, worn out loins in place of a queenly robe, which was hastily picked up in sudden terror. He who had seen this spectacle, would have denounced in the bitterest terms fortune's decree, but if the gods themselves had seen her then, when she saw Pyrrhus chopping to pieces her husband's limbs in wanton sport, and raised the wail of grief at once—unless mortal sorrows touch the hearts of the gods at all—it would have enforced tears from the eyes of heaven, and moved the hearts of the gods with sorrow."

*Polonius.* Look, he has turned pale, and there are tears in his eyes. That's enough, no more please.

*Hamlet.* It is all right I shall get you to speak out the rest.

(Page 92. Lines 475-501)

My good lord, will you see that the players are well cared for? Mind that they are well treated, for they are the historians and chroniclers of the time. It is better to have a bad epitaph after your death than their satire upon you while you are alive.

*Polonius.* My lord, I shall treat them just as they deserve.

*Hamlet.* By heavens, man, treat them much better. If every man is to be treated according as he deserves, none should escape whipping. Treat then as you value your honour and dignity. The less they deserve, the greater the merit in your generous treatment of them.

*Polonius* Come, sir.

*Hamlet* Follow him, friends: we'll hear a play to-morrow [*Exit POLONIUS, with all the Players but the First*] Dost thou hear me, old friend, can you play *The Murder of Gonzago*? 551

*First Player.* Ay, my lord

*Hamlet* We'll ha't to-morrow night You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in 't, could you not? 555

*First Player* Ay, my lord

*Hamlet* Very well Follow that lord, and look you mock him not [*Exit First Player*] [*Enter ROSENCRANZ and GUILDENSTERN*] My good friends, I'll leave you till night, you are welcome to Elsinore 560

*Rosencrantz* Good my lord!

[*Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*]

*Hamlet* Ay, so, God be wi' ye! Now I am alone.  
O! what a rogue and peasant slave am I  
Is it not monstrous that this player here,  
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,  
Could force his soul so to his own conceit *image*  
That from her working all his visage *wann'd*,  
Tears in his eyes, distraction *in* 's aspect,  
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting  
With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing! 550  
For Hecuba! *quivering accents*

What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba  
That he should weep for her? What would he do  
Had he the motive and the cue for passion *incubation*  
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears. 555  
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech, *deafened*  
Make mad the guilty and appal the free, *terrified with*  
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed  
The very faculties of eyes and ears *perceive*

Yet I,

A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak  
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,  
And can say nothing, no, not for a king,

560

*Polonius* Come, sirs.

*Hamlet* Follow, friends. To-morrow, we shall have a play

[*Exit POLONIUS, with all the Players except the First*]

Listen, old friend. Can you play the Murd of Gonzago?

*First Player.* Yes, my lord.

*Hamlet* We shall have it to-morrow night You could, if necessary, con a speech of some dozen<sup>d</sup> or sixteen lines, which I would compose and incorporate into it; could you not do it.

*First Player.* Yes, I could, my lord.

*Hamlet* Very well, follow that lord; mind you do not laugh at him. (*Exit First Player*) My good friends, I take leave of you, and do not meet you again till night You are welcome to Elsinore.

*Rosencrantz.* My good Lord.

*Hamlet* Good bye to you [*Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*] Now I am alone. What a wretch am I! Is it not extraordinary that this p<sup>l</sup>ayer in a fictitious circumstance, counterfeiting a passion, could so work himself up to his own conception that his face turned pale, tears stood in his eyes, and he looked agitated.

(Page 94. Lines 502—531.)

He spoke in quivering accents, his whole demeanour responded to his emotion. And all this for a thing that did not exist—for Hecuba! Hecuba is nothing to him, and he is nothing to Hecuba, and why should he weep for her? What would he not do, if he had my motive and incentive? He would flood the stage with tears, and deafen the ears of the hearers with the clamour of grief, drive the guilty mad and terrify the innocent, bewilder the ignorant, and daze the senses. Yet I, a dull-spirited and cowardly fellow, whine

Upon whose property and most dear life  
 A damn'd defeat was made Am I a coward?  
 Who calls me villain: break my pate across;  
 Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face;  
Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the th  
 As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this?

Ha! *By heaven!*

Swound, I should take it, for it cannot be

But I am pigeon-liver'd, and lack gall *ti*  
 To make oppression bitter, or ere this  
 I should have fatted all the region kites  
 With this slave's offal Bloody, bawdy villain  
 - Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless vill  
 O' vengeance!

Why, what an ass am I! *dull* This is most brave

That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,  
 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,  
 Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words,  
 And fall a cursing, like a very drab, *harlot*  
 A scullion! Fie upon 't foh! *Kitchen man*  
 About my brain; hum, I have heard,

That guilty creatures sitting at a play  
 Have by the very cunning of the scene *stunning p*  
 Been struck so to the soul that presently  
 They have proclaim'd their malefactions; *Villain*  
 For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak  
 With most miraculous organ. I'll have these playe  
 Play something like the murder of my father  
 Before mine uncle, I'll observe his looks;  
 I'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench.

I know my course. The spirit that I have seen  
 May be the devil and the devil hath power  
 To assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps,  
 Out of my weakness and my melancholy—

As he is very potent with such spirits— *po*  
Abuses me to damn me I'll have grounds *in*  
 More relative than this. the play's the thing  
 Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king

like John the dreamer, never stirred into action by my cause and can say nothing even for a king whose life has been cut short in a foul manner, and whose throne has been usurped Am I a coward? Who calls me a villain? breaks my head? pulls of my beards, and throws it to my face? Twists me by the nose? Calls me a damned liar? Who does all this insult to me? By heavens, I must submit to all this. It must be true that I am a coward, and lack the spirit to wreak vengeance, or before this I should have fattened all the kites with the corpse of this villain, bloody villain as he is, pitiless, treacherous, lascivious, monstrous villain. O Vengeance! What a fool I am! This is very fine, that I, the son of a dear father murdered. (Page 96. Lines 531—561)

Incited to revenge by powers of heaven and hell, must like a sharp-tongued woman, release my heart of all words, and begin to curse like a slut, a kitchen maid Shame! Sit to work, my brain! I have heard that guilty creatures, watching a play, have been so moved by the stirring passion and artistic working of the scene that they have at once confessed their crimes; though murder is speechless it will reveal itself through the most wonderful agency. I shall have the players play something like the murder of my father before my uncle, I shall watch his face; I will see to the very bottom of his heart; if he but change colour, I shall have no doubt left as to my course of action. The spirit that I have seen may be the devil, and the devil may assume any pleasing shape, and perhaps taking advantage of my weakness and melancholy, as he has a great hold upon such unhappy persons, deceives me so that he may ruin my soul. I must have reasons for action more positive than the mere visit of a ghost. The play is the best expedient by which can be discovered the guilt, hanging on the conscience of the king.





## ACT III

## Scene I. A ROOM IN THE CASTLE.

Enter KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ,  
and GUILDSTERN.

*King.* Can you, by no round about device, discover the reason why he behaves so wildly, banishing all the quietness of his life with violent and dangerous acts of madness.

(Page 98. Lines 562—583. ACT III. Sc. 1 Lines 1—4)

*Rosencrantz.* He confesses that he is very much troubled in spirit, but will by no means say what troubles him.

*Guildenstern.* Nor do we find him very apt to be pumped, he holds off with a cunning show of madness when we try to persuade him to tell us what troubles his spirit.

*Queen.* Did he receive you well?

*Rosencrantz.* He received us as a gentleman should.

*Guildstern.* But he had to strain himself very much to be polite to us.

*Rosencrantz.* He was very sparing of conversation, but he freely made replies to our questions.

*Queen.* Did you try to interest him in any amusement?

*Rosencrantz.* Madam, it happened that of certain players whom we met on the way, we told him, and he seemed to evince some delight. They have arrived at the court, and, as I think, they have already been ordered to play before him to night.

*Polonius.* That is very true. And he requested me to beg your majesties to be present at the performance.

*King.* With all pleasure. I am very happy to hear him inclined to mirth. Good gentlemen, encourage this tendency in him, and get him more and more to take pleasure in such things.

*Rosencrantz.* We shall, my lord.

[Exit ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.]

*King.* Dear Gertrude, leave us too, for we have sent for Hamlet secretly so that he may meet Ophelia here, or if by accident.

(Page 98. Lines 5—31.)

*Secretly*  
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,  
That he, as 'twere by accident, may here

31

*Assront Ophelia*

Her father and myself, law espials, *Spees*  
Will so bestow ourselves, that, *ce n' n' n'*  
We may of their encounter frankly judge,  
And gather by him, as he is behav'd,  
If't be the affliction of his love or no  
That thus he suffers for.

32

*Queen.* I shall obey you  
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish  
That your good beauties be the happy cause  
Of Hamlet's wildness; so shall I hope your virtues  
Will bring him to his wanted way again, *nomel*  
To both your honours

33

*Ophelia.* Madam, I wish it may.

*[Exit queen.]*

*Polonius.* Ophelia, walk you here Gracious, so please you,  
We will, bestow ourselves *[To ophelia]* Read on this  
book,

That show of such an exercise may colour  
Your loneliness. *We are oft to blame in this,*  
'Tis too much prov'd, that with devotion's usage  
And pious action we do sugar o'er  
The devil himself.

*King. [Aside.]* O' 'tis too true;  
How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience! 30  
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,  
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it  
Than is my deed to my most painted word.  
O heavy burden!

*Polonius.* I hear him coming; let's withdraw, my lord.

*[Exeunt king and polonius.]*

*Exit Enter HAMLET.*

*Hamlet* To be, or not to be that is the *question* 56  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Her father and myself, having every right to spy on him shall hide here so that seeing them, while remaining unseen, we may judge what the matter is between them, and find out from his conduct whether he suffers from pangs of disappointed love or not

*Queen.* I shall obey you. And as for yourself, Ophelia, I wish that your beauty may be the happy cause of Hamlet's fantastic behaviour, let us hope too that your goodness will restore him to his sanity, and bring honour to you both.

*Ophelia* Madam, I wish it may.

[Exit QUEEN ]

*Polonius* Ophelia, you walk here. My lord, if it may please you, we shall hide ourselves, [To Ophelia] Read in this book; your art of reading the book will excuse your being alone here. We are often guilty of such deception—and it is too often proved—that with a look of piety and holy deed a wicked purpose or motive is marked.

*King* [Aside] Oh, it is too true. How does that remark sting my conscience! The prostitute's cheek, powdered and and rouged, is not more loathsome to the means that serves to give it beauty than is my action to my sanctimonious words. What a heavy burden lies on my conscience!

*Polonius.* I hear his footsteps Let us hide, my lord.

[Exeunt KING and POLONIUS]

Enter HAMLET

*Hamlet.* Whether to go on living or to put an end to my existence—that is the question which troubles me, whether it is the sign of a nobler spirit to suffer—

(Page 100. Lines 82—57.)

all the vicissitudes of fortune, or to resist them, and so get rid of them To die, to sleep, and if that were the end, and so we may say that the sleep (death) puts an end to the anguish of the heart and the thousand evils and calamities, incidental to a mortal being. It will certainly be a blessed

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
 And by opposing end them? To die · to sleep;  
 No more, and, by a sleep to say we end  
 The heart ache and the thousand natural shocks  
 That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation  
 Devoutly to be wish'd To die, to sleep,  
 To sleep perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub  
 For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
 When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
 Must give us pause There's the respect  
 That makes calamity of so long life;  
 For who would bear the whips and scorns of t  
 The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contum  
 The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,  
 The insolence of office, and the spurns  
 That patient merit of the unworthy takes, c  
 When he himself might his quietus make  
 With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,  
 To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
 But that the dread of something after death,  
 The undiscover'd country from whose bour  
 No traveller returns, puzzles the will,  
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
 Than fly to others that we know not of?  
 Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,  
 And thus the native hue of resolution  
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
 And enterprises of great pitch and moment  
 With this regard their currents turn awry,  
 And lose the name of action. Soft you now  
 The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons  
 Be all my sins remember'd

Ophelia

Good my lord,

How does your honour for this many a day?

Hamlet I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

Ophelia. My lord, I have remembrances of yours,  
 That I have longed long to re-deliver;  
 I pray you, now receive them

end to desire most piously. To die, to sleep, but it may not be all, we may dream when we sleep ; that's the worst of it. We do not know what dreams may afflict us in that sleep of death when we are released of the trouble and confusion of mortal life. The consideration makes us hesitate, and submit to life-long misery For who would bear the lashings and contempt of the world, the wrong we suffer at the hands of the oppressor, the humiliation at the hands of the proud man, the anguish of disappointed love, the delay of the law, the haughtiness of an office holder, and the repulses which a patient man of merit meets, when he can easily settle the account with a naked dagger ? Who would bear the burden of life and drudge and groan under it except that the fear of what may ensue after death, the unexplored country, from from whose boundary no traveller returns, distracts and weakens the purpose, and induces us to endure those ills we are familiar with than court the unknown ones This consciousness makes us behave like cowards ; thus the original purpose is crossed and thwarted by reflection

(Page 102. Lines 58--85)

and actions of great importance are turned off under such consideration and remain suspended. Whom do I behold here ! The fair Ophelia ! Nymph, when you pray, pray for the remission of my sins.

*Ophelia.* My good lord, how have you been for so many days.

*Hamlet.* I thank you humbly ; well, well, well.

*Ophelia.* My lord, I have gifts of you, and I have long desired to return them. Will you please receive them now ?

Hamlet No, not I, 95  
 I never gave you aught any thing  
 Ophelia My honour'd lord, you know right well you did  
 And, with them, words of so sweet breath compos'd  
 As made the things more rich, their perfume lost,  
 Take these again, for to the noble mind unselfish  
 Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.  
 There, my lord

Hamlet Ha, ha ' are you honest

Ophelia My lord

Hamlet Are you fair ? 105

Ophelia. What means your lordship ?

Hamlet That if you be honest and fair, your honesty  
 should admit no discourse to your beauty.

Ophelia. Could beauty, my lord, have better relation  
 than with honesty ? 110

Hamlet Ay, truly ; for the power of beauty will sooner  
 transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the  
 force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness :  
 this was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it  
 proof I did love you once. bearded Skellern 115

Ophelia. Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so

Hamlet You should not have believed me, for virtue  
 cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it.  
 I loved you not nature

Ophelia. I was the more deceived lust or touch 120

Hamlet Get thee to a nunnery why wouldst thou  
 be a breeder of sinners ? I am myself indifferent  
 honest ; but yet I could accuse me of such things that  
 it were better my mother had not borne me. I am  
 very proud, revengeful, ambitious ; with more offences  
 at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in,  
 imagination to give them shape, or time to act them  
 in What should such fellows as I do crawling between  
 heaven and earth ? We are arrant knaves, all, believe  
 none of us Go thy ways to a nunnery Where's your  
 father ?

*Hamlet.* No, not I; I never gave you anything.

*Ophelia.* You know right well that you did, and these gifts were accompanied by sweet and gracious words, which increased the value of the gifts. Now that these words have lost all their meaning, you may take back the gifts, for to an unselfish mind highly esteemed gifts lose all their value when their givers turn unkind. Here are the gifts, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Ha, ha! are you virtuous?

*Ophelia.* My lord?

*Hamlet.* Are you fair?

*Ophelia.* What is your meaning, my lord?

*Hamlet.* If you are virtuous and fair, let not your virtue permit any dealing with your beauty.

*Ophelia.* Could beauty, my lord, have any better one to deal with than virtue?

*Hamlet.* Yes, indeed, but beauty has such power that it can more easily corrupt virtue than virtue can transform beauty. Sometimes it might sound like a contradiction but now the time proves it to be true. I loved you once.

(Page 104. Lines 86—116).

*Ophelia.* Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so

*Hamlet.* You should not have believed me, for, however, virtue may be acquired and assimilated by the human race, we cannot get rid of the original taint of sin. I loved you not

*Ophelia.* The greater was my deception then.

*Hamlet.* You should retire to a nunnery. Why should you bear sinners into the world? I am but fairly honest, yet I could indict myself of such crimes that it would have been better if my mother had not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more crimes that I am ready to be guilty of than I can conceive, imagine or act. What is the good of such fellows living on earth? We are all absolute rascals, believe none of us. Retire to a nunnery. Where is your father?





*Ophelia* At home, my lord.

*Hamlet*. Let him not come out of doors ; if he is to play the fool, let him do it in his own house and not elsewhere. Farewell

*Ophelia*. May God help him !

*Hamlet* If you marry take this curse for your dowry : however chaste and blameless you may be, you cannot escape bad name Retire to a nunnery , go . farewell. If you must necessarily marry, marry a fool, for wisemen know what horned beasts (cuckolds) you make of them. Retire to a nunnery, and that quickly too. Farewell.

*Ophelia* May heavenly powers restore him !

*Hamlet* I have heard how you paint your faces , God has given you one face, and you convert it into another face by your make-up , you dance, you walk with an affected gait, you talk in an artificial tone

(Page 106. Lines 117—144).

and give pet names to God's creatures, and excuse your lasciviousness by feigning ignorance I am sick of it, I will have no more of it , it has made me mad. I say there shall be no more marriages ; those who are already married shall live all but one , no hing shall interfere with the rest.

[ *Exit*

*Ophelia* Oh' what a noble mind is here unbalanced ! He united in him the couruer's accomplishment the soldier's valour, the scholar's judgement—he was the hope and flower of the goodly state, the mirror of fashion and pattern of courtly grace, the object of attraction to all beholders—now his reason is completely wrecked ! And I am the most unhappy of all women, who believed implicitly his eloquent professions of love, and now reason, the supreme gift of man, being put out of tune, like bells breaking into discord, and that unrivalled form and face of full blown youth, ravaged by madness. Alas for me to remember what I have seen, and to compare it with what I see now !

*Re enter KING and POLONIUS.*

*King*. You say it is love, but his feelings do not point to love ; nor what he spoke, though it was a little incoherent, looked like madness. There is some secret anguish in his soul, and he cherishes it in melancholy ; and I doubt not that when it unfolds itself and has its own way, it will involve us

And, I do doubt, the <sup>but Come</sup> hatch and the disclose  
 Will be some danger, which for to prevent,  
 I have in quick determination  
 Thus set it down he shall with speed to England,  
 For the demand of our neglected tribute.  
 Haply the seas and countries different  
 With variable objects shall expel environments  
 This something settled matter in his heart,  
 Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus  
 From fashion of himself What think you on't? *l.*

*Polonius* 'It shall do well but yet do I believe  
 The origin and commencement of his grief  
 Sprung from neglected love How now, Ophelia!  
 You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said;  
 We heard it all My lord, do as you please,  
 But, if you hold it fit, after the play,  
 Let his queen mother all alone entreat him  
 To show his griefs let her be round with him, *plainly*  
 And I'll be plac'd so please you, in the ear  
 Of all their conference If she find him not,  
 To England send him, or confine him where  
 Your wisdom best shall think.

*King* It shall be so.  
 Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go. *[Exit]*

Scene II A HALL IN THE CASTLE

*Enter HAMLET and certain Players*

*Hamlet* Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, tripping on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town crier spoke my lines Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently for in the very torrent, tempest, and—as I may say—whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance, that may give <sup>it may become natural a</sup> it smoothness O 't offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwigged fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings who for the most part

in great danger. In order to forestall it, I have quickly made up my mind that he shall be packed off to England. He may go there on the pretext of demanding the tribute that has fallen in arrears.

(Page 106. Lines 145—170)

Perhaps, the change of scene, the sea voyage and new countries, new objects that he will see, may remove the deep-seated trouble of his mind, by pondering which he behaves otherwise than his wonted manner. What do you think of it?

*Polonius.* I think it will have a good result; yet I believe that the trouble of his mind started from neglected love. How now, Ophelia! You need not repeat to us all that Hamlet had said, we heard it all. My lord, do as you please. But if you deem it wise, let his queen mother, after the play, send for him, and beg him to tell her his grief, let her be quite plain-spoken with him, and I shall hide myself, if it may please you, so that I may overhear their conversation. If she cannot find out what troubles him, let him be sent to England, or confined anywhere that you think best.

*King.* Let it be so. Madness in great ones must not be overlooked.

[*Exeunt*]

*Scene II. A HALL IN THE SAME*

*Enter HAMLET and several PLAYERS*

*Hamlet.* Recite the speech, I pray you, just in the manner I recited it, without any strain, but in all naturalness; but if you start ranting as many of your players do, it might as well do if the town-crier were to shout my lines. Do not make frantic gestures with your hand thus, but use moderation; for as you are swayed by tumultuous passion, you must acquire moderation and balance in speech and action so that it may make the passion natural and harmonious. It offends us mightily to hear

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a

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are capable of nothing but inexplicable dum's-shows  
and noise I would have such a fellow whipped for  
o'er-doing Termagant, it out herods Herod, pray you,  
avoid it *a character in the English Drama who always if*

*a long sentence in the*  
*First Player* I warrant your honour

*Hamlet* Be not too tame neither, but let your own  
discretion be your tutor suit the action to the word,  
the word to the action with this special observance,  
that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature, for any-  
thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing,  
whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to  
hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to the nature to show  
virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the  
very age and body of the time his form and pressure.  
Now, this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make  
the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious  
grieve, the censure of which one must in your allowance  
once o'erweigh a whole theatre of others O! there be  
players that I have seen play, and heard others praise,  
and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that,  
neither having the accent of Christians nor the gait of a  
Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and  
bellowed that I have thought some of nature's jour-  
ney-men had made men and not made them well, they  
imitated humanity so abominably *unnatural, but*

*First Player* I hope we have reformed that indif-  
ferently with us *fault*

*Hamlet* O! reform it altogether. And let those that  
play your clowns speak no more than is set down for  
them, for there be of them that will themselves laugh  
to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh  
too, though in the mean time some necessary question  
of the play be then *to be considered*; that's villano  
and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses  
it. Go, make you ready [Exeunt Players]

Enter POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN  
How now, my lord will the king hear this piece of wo-

only appreciate meaningless dumbshows and ranting, I would have such a fellow thrashed for carrying it beyond all measure like termagant. It beats Herod in ranting. Do please avoid it.

*First Player.* I assure your honour that your instructions will be followed.

*Hamlet.* Do not be again dull and tedious, trust your own judgement; adapt the action to the speech, and the speech to the action; then remember above everything else that you do not go beyond the limit of nature, for anything, carried to excess, will spoil the effect of acting, the object of acting, whether now or in the past, is to reflect and imitate nature—to show virtue or scorn as it is in its essence, to show the world as it moves, and lives and has its being. Now if this is overacted, or tamely rendered, it make the ignorant laugh, but it will fill the discerning spectators with regret—and it is their judgement which you should value above the whole crowd of spectators. There are players whom I have seen act and heard others praise very lightly too, who—I hope I mean no disrespect (either to God or man)—speak and walk neither like a Christian, nor like a pagan, nor like man, and who have walked on the stage in a ridiculously pompous manner and thundered in speech so that it has led me to think that not nature, but some inferior agents of nature had made men and that badly again because they imitated human action and speech to their discredit.

*First Player.* I hope we have fairly corrected this fault among us, Sir.

(Page 110 Lines 9—26)

*Hamlet.* Thoroughly weed it out. And let those who play clowns speak no more than the lines assigned to them, for there are some clowns who will themselves laugh and set some of the ignorant and vulgar spectators laughing, while in the meantime some necessary point in the play has to be settled, that is very bad and shows that the fool who speaks lines of his own composition to amuse the audience, is to be pitied for his ambition. Go, get yourselves ready,

*Exeunt PLAYERS*

*Enter POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN.*

Well, my lord, will the king come to the play?

*Polonius.* And the queen too, and that presently.

*Hamlet.* Bid the players make haste [*Exit* POLONIUS] 50  
Will you two help to hasten them?

*Rosencrantz* }  
*Guildenstern* } We will, my lord.

[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.]

*Hamlet* What, ho! *Horatio!*

*Enter* HORATIO

*Horatio.* Here, <sup>my dear lord</sup> sweet lord, at your service

*Hamlet.* *Horatio*, thou art e'en as just a man  
As e'er my conversation cop'd withal. met with 55

*Horatio* O! my dear lord,—

*Hamlet* <sup>favoured</sup> Nay, do not think I flatter,  
For what advancement may I hope from thee,  
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits <sup>heart</sup>  
To feed <sup>mantle</sup> and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flat-  
ter'd? <sup>flatter</sup>

No, let the candled tongue lick absurd pomp, 60  
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee <sup>prompt</sup>  
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear  
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice  
And could of men distinguish, her election  
Hath seal'd thee for herself, for thou hast been 65

As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,  
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards <sup>blows</sup>  
Hast ta'en with equal thanks, and bless'd are those  
Whose blood and judgment are so well co-mingled 70  
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger  
To sound what stop she please Give me that man  
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him  
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,  
As I do thee Something too much of this 75  
There is a play to night before the king,  
One scene of it comes near the circumstance  
Which I have told thee of my father's death:  
I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,

*Polonius.* And the queen too, and they are coming immediately.

*Hamlet.* Bid the players get ready at once [*Exit Polonius*]

*Exeunt ROSECRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*

*Hamlet.* What, ho, Horatio!

*Enter HORATIO*

*Horatio.* Here, dear lord, I am at your service.

*Hamlet.* Horatio you are even as honest a man as ever I met with in course of my dealing with men,

*Horatio.* O my dear lord—

*Hamlet.* Do not suppose that I am flattering you, for I can expect no preferment from you, whose only fortune is your genial spirits. There is no reason that the poor should be flattered. Let the tongue of flattery address itself to men of rank and position and let the too willing knees bend where some profit may result from cringing. Do you hear? Since my soul was free to make its choice

(Page 112, Lines 37—61)

and could distinguish between man and man, it has approved you, for you have been unaffected by suffering, one who has remained indifferent to the good and bad of fortune alike; and those in whom passion is balanced by reason, are blessed for fortune cannot make them the subject of her whims. Let the man who is not a slave of his passion appear before me, and I will hold him dear in my heart, in my heart of hearts, as I do hold you. We have had enough of it. There is a play to be produced before the king, one scene of which seems to resemble the circumstance of my



Even with the very comment of thy son!  
Observe mine uncle; if his occulted guilt  
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,  
It is a damned ghost that we have seen,  
And my imaginations are as foul  
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note  
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,  
And after we will both our judgments join  
In censure of his seeming judgement.

*Horatio*

Well, my lord:

'If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing,  
And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft.'

*Hamlet* They are coming to the play;—I must be idle:  
Get you a place. 91

*Danish march A flourish Enter KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS  
OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and Others.*

*King.* How fares our cousin Hamlet?

*Hamlet* Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish: I  
eat the air, promise-crammed; you cannot feed capons so.

*King* I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet: these  
words are not mine. 96

*Hamlet* No, nor mine now [*To POLONIUS*] My lord,  
you played once i' the university, you say?

*Polonius.* That did I, my lord, and was accounted a  
good actor. 100

*Hamlet.* And what did you enact?

*Polonius* I did enact Julius Cæsar. I was killed i' the  
Capitol, Brutus killed me.

*Hamlet* It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a  
calf there. Be the players ready? *excellent*

*Rosencrantz.* Ay, my lord: they stay upon your patience. *pleasure* 105

*Queen.* Come hither, my good Hamlet, sit by me.

*Hamlet* No good mother, here's metal more attractive.

*Polonius.* [*To the KING*] O ho! do you mark that?

*Hamlet.* Lady, shall I lie in your lap? 110

*Ophelia.* No, my lord. *Lying down at OPHELIA's feet.*

father's death, which I have described to you. I pray you, when that scene is acted, watch my uncle with the closest attention. If the speech cannot bring his hidden guilt to light it must be a wicked ghost that we have seen, and my fancies are as black as Vulcan's Smithy. Give him all attention; I will fix my eyes on his face, and afterwards we shall compare our impressions and judge his behaviour.

*Horatio.* Well, my lord; hold me responsible if I miss any the least change of expression on his face.

*Hamlet.* They are coming to the play. I must pretend to be crazy. Get a place for yourself.

(Page 14. Lines 62—82)

*Danish March. A flourish. Enter KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and others.*

*King.* How is my Kinsman, Hamlet, doing?

*Hamlet.* I am splendidly well. I am feeding on air, which is the food of the chameleon. I am fed on promises, which will not sustain a cock (or a fool).

*King.* This is no answer to me; these words of yours are not suitable to my ears.

*Hamlet.* Nor are these words mine now. [To Polonius] My lord, you once acted in the university—was it not true?

*Polonius.* Yes, I acted, my lord; and I was reckoned a good actor.

*Hamlet.* And what did you act?

*Polonius.* I acted Julius Cæsar; I was killed in the capital, and Brutus killed me.

*Hamlet.* It was an unskilled act of his to kill so capital a calf there. Are the players ready?

*Rosencrantz.* Yes, my lord, they are waiting to hear your pleasure.

*Queen.* Come here, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

*Hamlet.* No, good mother; here is a more attractive person.

[Lying down at OPHELIA'S FEET]

*Polonius.* [To the king]. Do you see that?

*Hamlet.* Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

*Ophelia.* No, my lord.

Hamlet I mean, my head upon your lap?

Ophelia Ay, my lord

Hamlet. Do you think I meant country matters?

Ophelia. I think nothing, my lord. 115

Hamlet That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.

Ophelia What is, my lord?

Hamlet. Nothing

Ophelia You are merry, my lord.

Hamlet Who, I? 120

Ophelia. Ay, my lord

Hamlet O God, your only jig maker. What should a man do but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks and my father died within's two hours

Ophelia Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord 125

Hamlet So long? Nay, then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables. O heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year, but, by'r lady, he must build churches then, or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is, 'For, O! for, O! the hobby-horse is forgot' 130

*Hautboys play. The dumb show enters.*

*Enter a King and a Queen very lovingly; the Queen embracing him, and he her She kneels, and makes show of protestation unto him He takes her up, and declines his head upon her neck, lays him down upon a bank of flowers: she, seeing him asleep leaves him Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown kisses it, and pours poison in the King's ears, and exit The Queen returns, finds the King dead, and makes passionate action The Poisoner, with some two or three Mutes, comes in again, seeming to lament with her The dead body is carried away The Poisoner woos the Queen with gifts she seems loath and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his love [Exeunt*

Ophelia What means this, my lord?

Hamlet. Marry, this is miobing mallecho, it means mischief

Oph. Belike this show <sup>Skulking murther</sup> imports the argument of the play.

*Hamlet.* I mean, may I put my head upon your lap ?

*Ophelia.* Yes, my lord, you seem to be merry.

*Hamlet.* Am I merry ?

*Ophelia.* Yes, my lord.

*Hamlet.* O God, I am good as a maker, of bawdy songs. What can a man do but be merry ? Look, what a happy face my mother wears, and my father died not more than two hours.

*Ophelia.* No, it is four months, my lord.

*Hamlet.* So long ? I should not then wear black any more.

[Page 116. Line 90 120]

✠ I will wear a suit of rich and magnificent stuff O God, he died two months ago, and is not yet forgotten Then it may be hoped that a great man's memory will survive his death by half a year ; but marry, he must build churches or people will not care to remember him, like the hobby-horse, of which it is said "Oh, the hobby horse is forgotten "

HAUTTOYS *play* The DUMB SHOW *enters*

Enter a king and a Queen very lovingly ; the king and queen embracing each other. She kneels and makes vows of love to him.

He lifts her up and lets his head rest on her neck ; lays himself down on a bed of flowers she, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Soon comes a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, pours poison in the king's ears and departs. The queen returns, finds the king dead, and makes a violent demonstration of grief The poisoner, with some two or three funeral attendants, returns, and pretends to lament with her The dead body is carried away The poisoner woos the queen with gifts ; she seems unwilling at first, and in the end accepts his love.

*Ophelia.* What does it mean, my lord ?

*Hamlet.* To be sure, this is skulking mischief ; it means nothing but mischief.

*Ophelia.* Perhaps this show reveals the subject of the play

*Enter Prologue.*

*Hamlet* We shall know by this fellow: the players cannot keep course: they'll tell all *Secret*

*Ophelia* Will he tell us what this show meant? 140

*Hamlet* Ay, or any show that you'll show him, be not you ashamed to show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means

*Ophelia* You are naught, you are naught. I'll mark the play. 145

*Prologue* For us and for our tragedy,  
Here stooping to your clemency,  
We beg your hearing patiently.

*Hamlet.* Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?

*Ophelia* 'Tis brief, my lord 150

*Hamlet* As woman's love.

*Enter two Players, King and Queen.*

*P. King* Full thirty times hath Phœbus' cart gone round  
Neptune's salt wash and Jellus' orb'd ground, earth  
And thirty dozen moons with borrow'd sheen light  
About the world have times twelve thirties been, 155  
Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands br  
Unite commutual in most sacred bands

*P. Queen* So many journeys may the sun and moon  
Make us again count o'er ere love be done!  
But woe is me! you are so sick of late,  
So far from cheer and from your former state,  
That I distrust you Yet though I distrust,  
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must;  
For women's fear and love holds quantity, equal  
In neither ought, er in extremity. 160

Now, what my love is, proof hath made you know,  
And as my love is so my fear is so

Where love is great the slightest doubts are fear:  
Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.

*P. King.* Faith I must love thee love, and shortly too; 165  
My obstant powers their functions leave to do.  
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,  
Honour'd, belov'd, and happily one as kind  
For husband shalt thou—

*Enter PROLOGUE.*

*Hamlet* This fellow will let us know everything; the players cannot keep anything back, they will tell us everything.

*Ophelia.* Will he tell us what this show meant?

(Page 116. Lines 121-135)

*Hamlet* He will explain any show that may be shown him.

*Ophelia* You are naughty. I will rather watch the play.

*Prologue.* For ourselves and for our tragedy, here bowing down to you, we beg your favour and patient hearing. *[Exit.]*

*Hamlet.* Can this be a prologue or a motto or a ring?

*Ophelia.* It is brief, my lord.

*Hamlet* As brief as woman's love.

*Enter A KING and A QUEEN.*

*P King* Thirty times has the chariot of the sun-god gone round the sea and the earth, and thirty dozen moons with borrowed light have shone upon the world for thirty dozen times, since our hearts were united by love, and our hands, by Hymen in the most sacred bonds

*P Queen* Let the sun and moon perform as many journeys over again before there is an end to our love. But, alas for me, you have been so sick lately, and lost all cheerfulness and normal health that you had enjoyed before that I have fears about you. Yet, though I am worried about you, let it not disturb you, my lord, for woman's fear is in proportion to her love—either they do not exist, or when they exist, they have no moderation. Now the depth of my love has been proved,

(Page 118 Lines 134-158)

and in exact relation to my love is my fear. Where there is great love, the trifles become a cause of fear, and where little fears are felt in an exaggerated form, it is a symptom of great love.

*P King* But indeed, I must leave you, love, and that shortly too. My active physical powers are declining, and you will live alone in this lovely world, esteemed and loved, when I am no more, and perhaps you will have again a husband as kind as myself

- P Queen. O! confound the rest.  
Such love must needs be treason in my breast: 175  
In second husband let me be accurst, *Cursed*  
None wed the second but who kill'd the first.  
Hamlet [Aside] *Wormwood, wormwood, Bitterness*  
P Queen The instances that second marriage note,  
re base respects of thrift, but none of love; *Jan* 180  
second time I kill my husband dead,  
When second husband kisses me in bed  
P King I do believe you think what now you speak;  
but what we do determine oft we break.  
*Purpose is but the slave to memory, determination* 185  
*of violent birth, but poor validity; Strength enough to endure*  
Which now, like fruit unripe, s'icks on the tree,  
But fall unshaken when they mellow be. *nife*  
Most necessary 'tis that we forget  
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is d'bt; 190  
What to ourse ves in passion we propose,  
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.  
*The violence of either grief or joy externally*  
Their own enactures with themselves destroy; *resolutions.*  
Where joy most revels grief doth most lament, 195  
Grief joy, joy grieves on slender accident. *with little cause*  
This world is not for aye, nor 'tis not strange,  
That even our love should with our fortunes change;  
For 'tis a question left us yet to prove  
Whether love lead fortune or else fortune love 200  
This great man down, you mark his favourite flies  
The poor advanc'd makes friends of enemies.  
And hitherto doth love on fortune tend,  
For who not needs shall never lack a friend;  
And who in want a hollow friend doth try *distress* 205  
Directly seasons him his enemy. *preparus*  
But, orderly to end where I begun,  
Our wils and fates do so contrary run *logically*  
That our devices still are overthrow'n. *go wrong*  
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own: 210  
So think thou wilt no second husband wed,  
But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.  
P Queen. Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light!  
*Sport and repose lock from me day and night!*

*P. Queen.* Let me not hear the rest of your sentences. Such love as you speak of must declare me base and faithless. Let me be cursed if I marry again. None can marry a second husband who did not kill her first husband.

*Hamlet.* [Aside]. It is as bitter as gall.

*P. Queen.* The motives prompting a second marriage are considerations of convenience, not of love. I kill my husband a second time when my second husband kisses me in bed.

*P. King.* I do believe you are absolutely sincere in your profession now, but we often break our promise. Our purpose is but subject to our memory, it is formed in a moment of passion, and is not strong enough to persist long. Like fruits unripe, it keeps hanging in the air, and then falls to the ground like fruits when they are ripe. It is inevitable that we forget to fulfil what is due to ourselves, for the fact is that what we promise to do in a moment of passion or impulse, is forgotten as soon as the passion expires. The ex remity of either grief or joy cancels what it promises to do as soon as it subsides. In ex remity joy becomes a revel and grief a lament, (Page 120 Lines 159 187) and grief may turn into joy, and joy into grief, as circumstances vary. The world will not last for ever, and it is not surprising that our love should change with circumstances. It is a matter still to be settled whether fortune obeys love or love obeys fortune. When a great man falls from power, you see his friends and companions run away from him, and when a poor man rises high in life, his enemies turn his friends, for he who is in no need of a friend, will have plenty of friends, and he who turns in his need to an insincere friend, at once turns him an enemy. But let me conclude logically as I began. our will and fate are opposed to each other so that what we will or purpose, often goes wrong we may propose one thing, but what it will turn out does not depend on ourselves. You may think now that you will marry no second husband, but this thought will disappear when your first husband is dead.

*P. Queen.* Let not earth give me food, nor heaven, light; let amusement and rest be withheld from me day and night; let my hope and faith be buried in despair; let the slender meal of a hermit in his cell be my portion in life, let every



'o desperation turn my trust and hope!  
 In anchor's cheer in prison be my scope;  
 Each opposite that blanks the face of joy  
 Meet what I would have well, and it destroy!  
 Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,  
 'Tis, once a widow, ever I be wife!

215

Hamlet If she should break it now!

P. King 'Tis deeply sworn. Sweet, leave me here awhile;  
 My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile <sup>the time</sup> pass;  
 The tedious day with sleep. <sup>May you have a peace!</sup> [Sleeps.]

P. Queen <sup>ere</sup> Sleep rock thy brain; <sup>slap.</sup>  
 And never come mischance between us twain! [Exit.]

Hamlet Madam, how like you this play?

220

Queen The lady doth protest to much, methinks

Hamlet O! but she'll keep her word

King Have you heard the argument? Is there no  
 offence in 't? <sup>Story</sup>

230

Hamlet No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest; no  
 offence i' the world <sup>jest</sup>

King What do you call the play?

Hamlet The Mouse trap. Marry, how? Tropically.  
 This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna: 235  
 Gonzago is the duke's name, his wife, Baptista. You shall  
 see anon, 'tis a knavish piece of work, but what of that?  
 your majesty and we that have free souls, it touches us not.  
 let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung. 240

<sup>Enter</sup> Enter Player as Lucianus

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king

Ophelia You are a good chorus, my lord

Hamlet I could interpret between you and your love,  
 if I could see the puppets dallying <sup>better</sup>

Ophelia You are keen, my lord, you are keen 245

Hamlet It would cost you a groaning to take off my  
 edge.

Ophelia Still better, and worse.

Hamlet So you mis-take your husbands. Begin, mur-  
 derer, pox, leave thy damnable faces, and begin. Come,  
 the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge. 251

enemy to joy cross what I desire to have for my good ; let everlasting conflict afflict me here and hereafter, if, once a widow, I ever become a wife again.

*Hamlet* If she should break her vow now.

*P. King* It is a solemn oath. Dear, leave me here alone for a while I am feeling dull and tired, and I should rather seek relief in sleep. [*sleeps*]

(Page 122. Lines 187-216)

*P Queen.* May you have a peaceful sleep, and let no evil come between us ever ?

*Hamlet* Madam, how do you like the play ?

*Queen* It seems to me that the lady swears too solemnly.

*Hamlet* But I doubt not she will keep her oath.

*King* Do you know the story ? Is there nothing objectionable in it.

*Hamlet.* No, no, it is all a fiction, and they will poison in a mere show. There can be nothing wrong in the play.

*King* What is the title of the play ?

*Hamlet.* The Mouse-trap Do you not like it ? It is just in a metaphorical sense. This play represents a murder done in Vienna, Gonzago is the name of the duke, his wife is Baptista, you shall soon see it is a story of villainy. But what does it matter to your majesty and to ourselves, who have a free conscience. Let the culprit writhe in agony, we have a free soul.

↓  
*Enter LUCIANUS* *Suffer mental torture*

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

*Ophelia.* You seem to be as informative as a chorus, my lord.

*Hamlet.* I could explain all that was going on between you and your love, if I saw you two playing in love.

*Ophelia.* You are too bitter, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Begin, murderer ; put away your ghastly faces, and begin. Come. "The shrill raven cries for vengeance.

Lucianus. Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and t.  
agreeing

Confer ate season, else no creature seeing, <sup>1</sup>

Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected, pear

With Hecate's ban thrice <sup>will be</sup> blasted, thrice infected, Lord

Thy natural magic and dire property, dreadful

On wholesome life usurp immediately. cease, or catch hold

[Pours the poison into the Sleeper's ears

Hamlet He poisons him i' the garden for 's estate His  
name's Gonzago, the story is extant, and writ in very  
choice Italian You shall see anon how the murders gets  
the love of Gonzago's wife 261

Ophelia The king rises.

Hamlet. What 'frighted with false fire? alarm

Queen How fares my lord?

Polonius Give o'er the play 265

King Give me some light away!

All Lights, lights, lights!

[*Exeunt all except HAMLET and HORATIO.*

Hamlet. Why, let the stricken deer go weep,

The hart ungalled play; unhurt, 260

For some must watch, while some must sleep.

~~So will we~~ To runs the world away passes

Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers, if the rest of  
my fortunes turn Turk with me, with two Provincial  
roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry  
of players, sir? 267

Horatio Half a share

Hamlet A whole one, I <sup>Abundant</sup> <sup>leather</sup>

For thou dost know, O Damon dear,

This realm dismantled was kobbed away

Of Jove himself, and now reigus here 280

A very, very—parrot Peacock

Horatio You might have rhymed

Hamlet O good Horatio! I'll take the ghost's word  
for a thou-and pound Didst perceive?

Horatio Very well, my lord 285

*Lucianus* My thoughts are dark as hell my hands ready,  
the poison is prepared, and the time suitable for the execution of the plan, (Page 122. Lines 217-241)

the time so favourable and no living creature being a witness to my deed. You deadly poison, prepared from herbs, collected at midnight under the power of Hecate's enchantment thrice exercised, let your magic power and fatal action work at once on life.

*[Pours the poison into the sleeper's ears.]*

*Hamlet.* He poisons him in the garden for his property. His name is Gonzago; the story still exists, and is written in elegant Italian. You shall see soon how the murderer wins the love of Gonzago's wife.

*Ophelia* The king rises.

*Hamlet.* Has he been frightened by a false alarm?

*Queen* How is my lord?

*Polonius* Abandon the play.

*King* Let there be some light for me.

*All.* Lights, lights, lights!

*[Exeunt all except HAMLET and HORATIO.]*

*Hamlet.* Why, let the wounded deer retire to the bush and weep, and let the unhurt one sport, for some must watch and some must sleep, and so the world passes. Would not this speech of mine, sir and a decking out in abundance of feathers—if everything else in fortune turn unfavourable to me—with two roses worn on my shoes, entitle me to enter a party of actors?

*Horatio* You may be admitted to a half membership of such a party.

*Hamlet* I say a whole one you know, O dear Damon, of this kingdom was Jove himself rubbed,

(Page 124, Lines—243—266)

and in his place now reigns a peacock

*Horatio* You could have taken to verse-making.

*Hamlet.* O good Horatio, the ghost's message is worth a thousand pounds to me. Did you perceive the result of the play?

*Hamlet* Upon the talk of the poisoning?

*Horatio* I did very well note him.

*Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*

*Hamlet* Ah, ha! Come, some music! come, the recorders!

For if the king like not the comedy,

When then, belike he likes it not, perdy 290

Come, some music!

*Guil* Good my lord, <sup>Grant</sup> vouchsafe me a word with you

*Hamlet*. Sir, a whole history.

*Guildenstern* The king, sir,—

*Hamlet* Ay, sir, what of him? 295

*Guildenstern* Is in his retirement marvellous distempered

*Hamlet* With drink, sir?

*Guildenstern* No, my lord, rather with <sup>anger</sup> choler. 308

*Hamlet* Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to this doctor, for, for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into far more choler.

*Guildenstern* Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame, and start not so wildly from my affair.

*Hamlet* I am tame, sir, pronounce. <sup>sublime</sup>

*Guildenstern* The queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you. 306

*Hamlet* You are welcome

*Guildenstern* Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment, if not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business

*Hamlet*. Sir, I cannot

*Guildenstern* What, my lord? <sup>Properly</sup> <sup>Sensible and in answer</sup>

*Hamlet* Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseased, but, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command, or, rather, as you say, my mother. therefore no more, but to the matter. my mother, you say,—

*Rosencrantz* Then, thus she says: your behaviour hath struck her into amazement and admiration. 310

<sup>perplexed</sup> <sup>astonishment</sup>

*Horatio.* Very well, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Did not the king get up as he heard the talk of poisoning?

*Horatio.* I very carefully observed him.

*Hamlet.* Ah, let me have some music. Let the recorders be brought. For if the King does not like the comedy, why, perhaps he likes it not. Let us have some music.

*Re enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*

*Guildenstern.* My good lord, let me have a word with you

*Hamlet.* Why, sir, a word; you can have a whole multitude of words.

*Guildenstern.* The King, sir,—

*Hamlet.* Yes, sir, what is the matter with him?

*Guildenstern.* On retiring from the play he is very much upset.

*Hamlet.* Is he upset with drink, sir?

*Guildenstern.* No, my lord, with choler (anger).

*Hamlet.* You should have acted wisely in taking the matter to his doctor, for, if I were to attempt to cure him of it, it might make him still worse.

*Guildenstern.* My good lord, please talk a little more sense and reason, and do not shy the point.

*Hamlet.* I am quite submissive, sir, say your pleasure.

*Guildenstern.* The queen, your mother, in great distress of mind, has sent me to you (Page 126 Lines 267—268).

*Hamlet.* You are welcome.

*Guildenstern.* My good lord, the politeness you show me is not of the right kind. If it please you to answer properly and with sense, I shall deliver to you your mother's command; if not, let me beg your pardon and return without doing my business.

*Hamlet.* Sir, I cannot.

*Guildenstern.* What, my lord?

*Hamlet.* I cannot make a sane answer; my intelligence is infected, but, sir, such answer as I can make, it is for you to demand of me, or, rather, as you say, my mother may demand of me; therefore, without wasting any more words, let us come straight to the subject: my mother, you say,—

*Rosencrantz.* Then thus she says; your behaviour has amazed and perplexed her.

*Hamlet.* O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother! ~~the whole of this~~

But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration? Impart

*Rosencrantz.* She desires to speak with you in her closet ere you go to bed 325

*Hamlet.* We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us?

*Rosencrantz.* My lord you once did love me.

*Hamlet.* So I do still, by these pickers and stealers 329

*Rosencrantz.* Good my lord, what is your cause of discontenter? you do surely bar the door upon your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend.

*Hamlet.* Sir, I lack advancement ~~ambitions~~

*Rosencrantz.* How can that be when you have the voice of the king himself for your success son in Denmark? 335

*Hamlet.* Ay, sir, but 'While the grass grows,'—the proverb is something musty. ~~stale~~

*Enter Players, with recorders musical instruments*

O! the recorders, let me see one. To withdraw with you: why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil? ~~trap~~ *behaviour* 340

*Guildestern.* O! my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly. ~~sound~~

*Hamlet.* I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

*Guildestern.* My lord, I cannot. 345

*Hamlet.* I pray you

*Guildestern.* Believe me, I cannot.

*Hamlet.* I do beseech you pray

*Guildestern.* I know no touch of it, my lord. 349

*Hamlet.* 'Tis as easy as lying; govern these ventages ~~new~~ with your finger and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent-music. Look you, these are the stops, *elicit*

*Guildestern.* But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony, I have not the skill. 355

*Hamlet.* What a wonderful son must I be to have so astonished my mother? But is there nothing else to follow the mother's astonishment? Give it.

*Rosencrantz.* She desires to speak with you in her private room before you go to bed,

*Hamlet.* I shall obey even if she were ten times my mother. Any other business with me?

*Rosencrantz.* My lord, you once loved me.

*Hamlet.* I do still love you, I swear by my hands.

*Rosencrantz.* My good lord, what is the cause of your trouble? You invite restriction of your liberty, if you refuse to communicate your trouble to your friend.

*Hamlet.* Sir I lack promotion.

*Rosencrantz.* How can that be, when the King has promised you succession to the throne of Denmark?

*Hamlet.* Yes, sir, but you know the proverb—"While the grass grows"—though the proverb has become commonplace now.

(Page 126. Lines 297—327)

*Re enter PLAYERS with recorders.*

Oh, here are the recorders; let me see one. Let us step aside—why do you make an attempt to have an advantage of me as if you want to push me into a net?

*Guildestern.* O my lord, if in my duty I seem to be a little too over-zealous, believe that my love is sound, if a little too brusque.

*Hamlet.* I do not understand you. Will you play upon this pipe?

*Guildestern.* My lord, I cannot.

*Hamlet.* Do please play upon it.

*Guildestern.* Believe me, I cannot.

*Hamlet.* I pray you

*Guildestern.* I do not know any touch of it, my lord.

*Hamlet.* It is as easy as lying. Press upon these holes with your fingers and thumb, blow with your mouth into it, and it will produce the sweetest music. Look, here are the stops.

*Guildestern.* But I cannot elicit any music out of them. I have not the skill. . .



*Hamlet.* Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me. You would play upon me, you would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; <sup>you would scan me through my being</sup> you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass, and there is much <sup>360</sup> music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me. <sup>365</sup> ~~you would scan me through and~~

*Enter POLONIUS*

Good bless you, sir!

*Polonius.* My lord, the queen would speak with you and presently.

*Hamlet.* Do you see yonder <sup>370</sup> ~~could~~ that's almost in shape of a camel?

*Polonius.* By the mass, and 'tis like a camel, indeed.

*Hamlet.* Methinks it is like a weasel.

*Polonius.* It is backed like a weasel.

*Hamlet.* Or like a whale?

*Polonius.* Very like a whale. <sup>375</sup> *Presently*

*Hamlet.* Then will I come to my mother by and by.  
[*Aside*] They fool me to the top of my bent. [Aloud] I will come by and by.

*Polonius.* I will say so

[*Exit.*

*Hamlet.* 'By and by' is easily said. Leave me, friends.  
<sup>380</sup> *Midnight* [Exeunt all but HAMLET.]

'Tis now the very witching time of night, release <sup>381</sup>

When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out

Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood,

And do such bitter business as the day

Would quake to look on. Soft! now to my mother. <sup>385</sup>

O heart! lose not thy nature; let not ever

The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom; ~~heart~~

Let me be cruel, not unnatural;

I will speak daggers to her, but use none;

My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites; <sup>390</sup>

*Hamlet.* Now see how worthless stuff you make of me. You would play upon me; you seem to know my stops; you would extract the secret of my heart; you would scan me through and through. There is much music in this little organ; yet you cannot bring out the music. By God, do you think that it is easier to play upon me than on a pipe? You may call me what instrument you like, you put me out of patience, but you cannot play upon me.

(Page 130. Lines 328—354.)

*Enter* POLONIUS

May God bless you, sir!

*Polonius.* My lord, the queen would speak with you and that at once.

*Hamlet.* Do you see that cloud over there, which resembles a camel.

*Polonius.* It is indeed like a camel.

*Hamlet.* It seems to me that it looks like a weasel.

*Polonius.* It has the back of a weasel.

*Hamlet.* Or it is like a whale.

*Polonius.* It is very like a whale.

*Hamlet.* Then will I go to my mother presently. They humour me to the limit of my capacity. I shall be going soon.

*Polonius.* I shall say so.

*Hamlet.* 'Soon' is easily said. [*Exit Polonius.*]

Let me be alone, friends [*Exeunt all but Hamlet.*]

It is the time of night when dire enchantments are abroad, when churchyards open their mouths, and hell releases tainted and unwholesome vapours. Now could I revel in blood, and do such dreadful deeds as the day would tremble to witness. Patience! Now I am going to my mother. O heart, keep your normal feelings and instincts; let not the cruel instincts of Nero possess my heart. Let me be cruel, but not anything in defiance of natural instincts and feelings. I will speak harsh words to her, but use no harshness. Let my tongue play false with my heart in this respect. Howsoever she may

How in my words soever she be shent,<sup>1</sup>  
 To give them seals never, my soul, consent! [Exit

Scene III. A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Enter KING, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN.

King. I like him not, nor stands it safe with us  
 To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you;  
 If your commission will forthwith dispatch,  
 And he to England shall along with you.  
The terms of our estate may not endure our  
Hazard so dangerous as doth hourly grow  
Out of his lunacies. *equip myself*

Guildenstern. We will ourselves provide

Most holy and religious fear it is  
 To keep those many many bodies safe  
 That live and feed upon your majesty. 10

Rosencrantz The single and peculiar life is bound  
 With all the strength and armour of the mind  
 To keep itself from noyance; but much more  
 That spirit upon whose weal depend and rest  
The lives of many. The cease of majesty 15  
 Dies not alone, but, like a gulf doth draw *Wh*  
What's near it with it, it is a massy wheel,  
 Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,  
 To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things  
 Are mortis'd and adjoin'd, which, when it falls, 20  
 Each small annexment, petty consequence,  
 Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone  
 Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.

King. Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage,  
 For we will fettters put upon this fear, *Crude* 25  
 Which now goes too free footed

Rosencrantz }  
 Guildenstern } We will haste us.

[Exit ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

Enter POLONIUS.

Polonius My lord, he's going to this mother's closet.  
 Behind the arras I'll convey myself

be harshly rebuked, let not my heart confirm them in action,  
(Page 130. Lines 355—382)

*Scene III. A ROOM IN THE SAME*

*Enter KING, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN*

*King* I do not like him ; nor is it safe for us to give him free latitude in his madness. Therefore, you should hold yourselves ready, and I will immediately draw up your commission (warrant), and he shall depart to England along with you. Our position as King cannot brook the danger of Hamlet being at large—a danger which is daily growing out of his madness.

*Guildenstern.* We shall equip ourselves for the voyage. It is a matter of sacred and religious fear to provide for the safety of so many people that they may live and earn their living in your majesty's dominion.

*Rosencrantz.* It is the duty of every individual to keep himself from all harm by all the energy and powers of his mind. It is much more the duty of that person to take care of his safety, upon whose well being depend the lives of so many. The death of a King involves the destruction of many. Like a whirlpool it sucks in whatever is near it. It is like a massive wheel, fixed on the top of the highest mountain, to whose huge spokes many things of less importance are bound. If it crashes, then each petty thing, annexed to it, however of immaterial consequence, goes down with it. Whenever the King sighed in his grief, he seemed to echo the collective sighs of all men in his kingdom.

*King* Please get yourselves ready quickly for this voyage for we must put this object of fear under restraint and there can be no peace or safety for us so long as it has free movement.

(Page 132. Lines 1—26)

*Rosencrantz, Guildenstern* We shall hasten our preparation.

[*Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*

*Enter POLONIUS*

*Polonius* My lord, he is going to his mother's room. I shall put myself behind the arras to overhear what goes on

*Proceeding*

To hear the process; I'll warrant she'll tax him home; 30  
 And, as you said, and wisely was it said,  
 'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,  
 Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear  
 The speech, of vantage. Fare you well, my liege:  
 I'll call upon you ere you go to bed  
 And tell you what I know

*King* Thanks, dear my lord. 35

*most foul* [Exit POLONIUS.]

O! my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;  
 It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,  
 A brother's murder! Pray can I not,  
 Though inclination be as sharp as will: 40  
 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;  
 And like a man to double business bound,  
 I stand in pause where I shall first begin,  
 And both neglect. What if this cursed hand  
 Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,  
 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens 45  
 To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy  
 But to confront the visage of offence? *face to face*  
 And what's in prayer but this two-fold force,  
 To be forestalled, ere we come to fall, *check*  
 Or pardon'd, being down? Then, I'll look up; *look*  
 May fault is past. But, O! what form of prayer  
 Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder  
 That cannot be since I am still posse's'd  
 Of those effects for which I did the murder,  
 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen  
 May one be pardon'd and retain the offence *pen*  
 In the corrupted currents of this world *ways*  
 Offence's gilded hand many shove by justice, *but*  
 And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself  
 Buys out the law; but 'tis not so above; *hear*  
 There is no shuffling, there the action lies *in*  
 In his true nature, and we ourselves compell'd  
 Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults

between mother and son. I assure you that she will take him severely to task. And, as you said, and it was said wisely, it is proper that somebody else than a mother, since their natural relationship rules out impartial report should overhear the conversation between the two from a position of advantage Farewell, my lord. I shall see you before you retire, and tell you everything.

*King* Thanks, my dear lord.

[Exit POLONIUS.]

Oh, my crime stinks, and its stinking smell goes to heaven. It is attended by the curse that pursued the first murderer (Caine) of his brother. I cannot pray, though my desire to pray is as strong as my will. My guilt is stronger than my will, and so frustrates it, however strong it may be. And like a man, moved by conflicting interests, I waver as to where I shall begin, and attend to none of the interests. If this cursed hand that murdered a brother, were thicker with a coating of blood, is not there rain enough in the gracious heavens to wash it clean? What is the use of God's mercy if it cannot challenge and trample sin. What is the good of prayer if it has not this double function—either to prevent us from falling into sin,

(Page 134 Lines 27-49).

or to ensure forgiveness when we have fallen into sin? Then I may look up to the heavens and pray, my sin is a thing of the past. But how should I frame my prayer? Shall I say—"forgive me my foul murder? It will not do, for I am still possessed of the benefits of my crime—my crown, my ambition, and my queen. May one be forgiven while enjoying the fruit of one's crimes? In the dishonest world, crime can evade justice, and buy it off with gold. And often it is seen that bribery can suspend the legal action. But in heaven it is different. There is no trickery in heaven; there the crime cannot be gilded over but stands in its nakedness, and we are compelled to give evidence against ourselves to the minutest details of our sins. What am I to do then? What relief is there for me? Should I try what repentance

To give in evidence. What then? what rests?  
Try what repentance can. What can it not? 65

Yet what can it, when one can not repent?  
O wretched state! O basin black as death! heart  
O limed soul, that struggling to be free  
Art more engaged! Help, angels! in a party;  
Bow, stubborn knees, and heart with strings of steel 70  
So soft as sinews of the new-born babe  
All may be well. *[Retire and kneels.]*

*Enter Hamlet, <sup>the ghost</sup> sitting*

Hamlet. Now might I do it pit, now he is praying; but  
And now I'll do 't: and so I go to heaven;  
And so am I reveng'd That would be gain'd. 75  
A villain kills my father, and for that, *considered.*  
I, his sole son, do this same villain send  
To heaven.

Why, this is hire and salary. not revenge.  
He took my father grossly, full of bread, in his sin 80  
With all his crimes broad blown, as finch as flay, *fullness*  
And how his audit stands who knows who heaven?  
But in our circumstance and course of thought we can judge  
'Tis heavy with him And am I then reveng'd,  
To take him in the purging of his soul, 85  
When he is fit and season'd for his passage?

No  
Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent; *opportunity*  
When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,  
Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed, 90

At gaming, swearing, or about some act  
That has no relish of salvation in 't; *he may receive his due*  
*may* Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven, *in the hell*  
And that his soul may be as damn'd and black  
As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays.  
This physic but prolongs thy sickly days 95

*The King rises and advances*

King. My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:  
Words without thoughts never to heaven go *[Exit]*

can effect? What can it not accomplish? Yet what is it good for if one cannot repent? I am in a miserable state. O heart black as death! O entangled soul, the more it struggles to be free, the more it gets entangled! Let the angels help me! Let me make an attempt; let my stubborn knees bend, and heart, made of wires of steel, be as soft as the bones of the new born babe! All may be well.

*[Retires and kneels.*

*Enter HAMLET.*

*Hamlet* Now might I murder him easily, now that he is praying. If I do it now, he goes straight to heaven, and that would be a fine revenge; it ought to be carefully scrutinized; a villain kills my father, and for that, I, his only son, send that very villain to heaven.

(Page 136. Lines 50—78)

This is like doing him a service which he has hired an agent to render; it cannot be revenge. He murdered my father in the full flush of his sin, when he had no moment of purging himself of his sin. None knows how his account stands with God. But so far as we can judge roughly, he carries the heavy burden of sin to the next world. Am I then revenged in dispatching him when he is engaged in prayer for remission of sin, by which process he is rendered best qualified to go to heaven (if he is murdered at the moment? No, let the sword return to its sheath, and let it wait for a grimmer opportunity say, when he is drunk, or asleep or in a violent rage, or at gambling sweating or doing some knavish act which bars out all chance of salvation. Then catch him and hurl him to the earth so that his soul in all its wickedness, may go to hell. My mother waits for me. The remedy that I prescribe for you will but protract your sickness. *[Exit.*

*+ Lengthens—  
[The king rises and advances*

*King* More vapoury words go up from me, my thoughts remain on earth. Words divorced from thoughts cannot go to heaven. *[Exit.*



## Scene IV. THE QUEEN'S APARTMENT

Enter QUEEN and POLONIUS *frankly or bluntly*

*Pol* He will come straight. Look you lay home to him:  
Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,  
And that your Grace hath screen'd and stood between  
Much heat and him I'll silence me e'en here.  
Pray you, be round with him, *but spoken of frankly*. 5

*Hamlet. [Within]* Mother, mother, mother! *assure*

*Queen* I'll warrant you;

Fear me not Withdraw, I hear him coming

[POLONIUS *hides behind the arras*]

Enter HAMLET.

*Hamlet* Now, mother, what's the matter?

*Queen* Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended

*Hamlet* Mother, you have my father much offended. 10

*Queen* Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue. *C*

*Hamlet* Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

*Queen* Why, how now, Hamlet! *Simple tongue*

*Hamlet.* What's the matter now?

*Queen.* Have you forgot me? *holy cross*

*Hamlet* No, by the rood, not so:

You are the queen, you husband's brother's wife; 15

And,—would it were not so!—you are my mother.

*Queen* Nay then, I'll set those to you that can speak

*Hamlet* Come come, and sit you down, you shall not  
*hudge,*

You go not, till I set you up a glass

Where you may see the inmost part of you 20

*Queen* What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?  
Help, help! ho!

*Polonius [Behind]* What, ho! help! help! help!

*Hamlet [Draws]* How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, *spy*  
dead! *[Makes a pass through the arras]*

*Polonius [Behind]* O! I am slain.

*Queen* O me! what hast thou done? 25

*Hamlet* Nay, I knew not. is it the king?

## Scene IV. ANOTHER ROOM IN THE SAME.

*Enter* QUEEN and POLONIUS.

*Polonius.* He will come soon Mind that you charge him home; tell him that his naughty acts have been too unrestrained to be tolerated and that you personally have saved him from the displeasure of the king. I shall conceal myself here. Please do not mince matters.

*Hamlet.* [*Within.*] Mother, mother, mother!

*Queen.* I assure you I will do my duty. Withdraw; I hear him coming.

*Polonius goes behind the arras*

(Page 138 Lines 7.—97. See Lines 1—8)

*Enter* HAMLET.

*Hamlet.* Now, mother, what is the matter?

*Queen.* Hamlet, you have offended your father very much

*Hamlet.* Mother, you have offended my father very much.

*Queen.* You answer with a flippant tongue, this will not do.

*Hamlet.* You forget that you question me with a sinful tongue.

*Queen.* What do you mean, Hamlet?

*Hamlet.* Why, what is the matter?

*Queen.* Do you forget what is due to me (as mother)?

*Hamlet.* No, I swear by the cross, I have not forgotten you You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife. And you are—I wish it were not so—my mother

*Queen.* Well, then I shall find those who can speak to you with authority.

*Hamlet.* No matter, be seated, I will not let you go till I hold a glass in which you may see your inmost self reflected.

*Queen.* What are you going to do? You will not murder me? Help help, ho!

*Polonius* [*Behind*] What, ho! help, help!

*Hamlet* [*Drawing*] What's that? A rat? It is dead as sure as it can be [*Makes a pass through the arras.*]

*Polonius* [*Behind*] Oh, I am slain! [*Falls and dies*]

*Queen.* Alas, what have you done?

*Hamlet.* I do not know. Is it the king?

Queen. O' what a <sup>hasty</sup> rash and bloody deed is this!

Hamlet. A bloody deed almost as bad, good mother,  
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.

Queen. As kill a king!

Hamlet. Ay, lady, 'twas my word. 30

[Lifts up the arras and discovers POLONIUS.]

[To POLONIUS.] Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool,  
farewell! <sup>miserable meddling</sup>

I took thee for thy better; take thy fortune,  
Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger  
Leave wringing of your hands peace! sit you down,  
And let me wring your heart; for so I shall 35  
If it be made of penetrable stuff, <sup>stiffened</sup>  
If darned custom have not brass'd it so hard  
That it is proof and bulwark against sense

Queen. What have I done that thou dar'st <sup>use</sup> wag thy  
tongue

In noise so rude against me? <sup>So clamorously</sup>  
Hamlet. Such an act 40

That blurs the <sup>claw</sup> grace and blush of modesty, <sup>blame</sup>  
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose <sup>beauty</sup>  
From the fair forehead of an innocent love  
And sets a blister there, makes marriage vows  
As false as dicers' oath, O' such a deed 45

As from the body of contraction plucks  
The very soul, and sweet religion makes  
A rhapody of words, heaven's face doth <sup>glow</sup>  
Yea, this solidity and compound mass, <sup>globe</sup>  
With trifling visage, as against the doom, 50  
Is thought sick at the act.

Queen. <sup>Sound of denunciation</sup> Ay me! what act, <sup>in light</sup>  
That roars so loud and thunders in the index?

Hamlet. Look here, upon this picture, and on this,  
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers <sup>Picture</sup>  
See, what a grace was seated on this brow; 55  
Hyperion's curls, the frant of Jove himself, <sup>fine head</sup>  
An eye like Mars to threaten and command,

*Queen.* Oh, what a rash and bloody act it is !

*Hamlet.* It is bloody act which is, let me say, as bad, good mother, as killing a king and marrying his brother.

*Queen.* As killing a king ! What do you mean by it ?

*Hamlet.* Yes, that is what I say.

*[Lifts up the arras, and sees Polonius]*

You miserable, rash, meddling fool, farewell. I supposed that it was the king. You meet your fate.

(Page 140 Lines 8—32)

Now we find that it is dangerous to meddle in the affairs of others. Stop wringing your hands. Pease, be seated and let me probe your heart. for I intend to do it, if your heart is capable of being penetrated into, if it has not been hardened by use so that it is insensible to impressions.

*Queen.* What have I done that you use your tongue so clamorously against me ?

*Hamlet.* It is an act grossly offending modesty, reducing virtue to hypocrisy, blasting the purity of love and shaming it, turning marriage vows to the oaths of gamblers—it is an act that destroys the sacredness of a contract, and renders religion a mere play of words, and causes heaven to blush in shame, that fills this solid and compact earth with sorrowful and pale looks as if in anticipation of the judgement day.

*Queen.* Alas, what act can it be that has such a sound of denunciation in its very preface ?

*Hamlet.* Look here upon this picture, and on that—the portraits of the two brothers. See what beauty marks this brow—the curls of hyperion (the sun god) : the forehead of Jove himself, the awe-inspiring eye of Mars (the war-god), which can command obedience, and strike terror ;

(Page 140. Lines 33—57)

Deportment like that of Mercury, the messenger of the gods, having just descended on a high mountain ; it was a union of so many graces and a figure to which every god seemed to have contributed something so that the world might have the very ideal of a man. This was your husband.

*attitude!*  
 A station like the herald Mercury  
 New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill  
 A combination and a form indeed, A—  
 Where every god did seem to set his seal.  
 To give the world assurance of a man.  
 This was your husband look you now, what follow  
 Here is your husband, like a mildew'd ear, *even so*  
 Blasting his wholesome brother Have you eyes? 65  
 Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed  
 And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?  
 You cannot call it love, for at your age  
 The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble, *Cooler*  
 And waits upon the judgment, and what judgment  
 Would step from this to this? *feeling* Sense, sure, you have  
 Else could you not have motion; but sure, that sense  
 Is apoplex'd; for madness would not err, *prudent*  
 Nor sense to ecstasy *madness* was ne'er so thrall'd *Subject*  
 But it reserv'd some quantity of choice,  
 To serve in such a difference What devil was 't  
 That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman blind? *at*  
 Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight, *blu*  
 Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,  
 Or but a sickly part of one true sense  
 Could not so mope, *Stupid*  
 O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,  
 It thou canst mutine in a matron's bones, *rebel*  
 To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,  
 And melt in her own fire; proclaim no shame  
 When the compulsive *love* ardour gives the charge, *a*  
 Since frost itself as actively doth burn,  
 And reason panders will *Subordinate*  
 Queen O Hamlet! speak no more  
 Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul;  
 And there I see such black and grained spots  
 As will not leave their tinct.  
 Hamlet. Nay, but to live  
 In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,

Now just see in what follows ; here is your present husband ; he looks like the ear of corn which is tinted and poisons the air about his healthy brother. Have you eyes ? How could you otherwise leave this fair mountain, and come down to feed and fatten on this moorland (Claudius) ? Ha ! have you eye ? You cannot call it love , for at your age sensual passion has lost its intensity, it has become quite sober, and is subject to reason or judgement. And what judgement would exchange the one (the mountain) for the other (the moor) ? You have certainly feeling, or you could not have impulses, but surely that feeling is paralysed for even a mad person not have such mistake, nor sense could not so give way to madness as not to retain some discrimination in a matter showing such a difference. What devil was it that could have so cheated you, and played a dirty trick upon you ? Eyes without feeling without sight, ears without hands or eyes, the sense of smell and nothing else, or but a diseased fraction of a sense could not have so groped. O shame ! you do not blush ! Hell ready to break loose, if you raise a tumult in the defunct organs of a middle aged woman, virtue is but as wax that melts away in the fire of youth. Let it be not shame when a person gives away to the charge of vehement passion.

(Page 142. Lines 58—86)

Since here is an example of extinct passion burning so fiercely and reason being made to feed it.

*Queen.* O Hamlet, speak no more. You reveal to my eyes the abyss of my soul, and there I see such a deep-grained taint that it cannot be cast out.

*Hamlet.* But to live in lewdness, coddling and making love in gross ser—

Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love  
Over the nasty sty,—

Queen. O' speak to me no more;  
These words like daggers enter in mine ears;  
No more, sweet Hamlet! 95

Hamlet. A murderer, and a villain;  
A slave that is not twentieth part the tithes ~~faith~~  
Of your precedent lord; a vice of kings; clown  
A cut-purse of the empire and the rule,  
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole, 100  
And put it in his pocket! ~~Head~~ Crown

Queen. No more!

Hamlet. A king of shreds and patches,—

~~More as you were over me~~ Enter Ghost.

Save me and hover o'er me with your wings,  
You heavenly guards! What would your gracious figure?

Queen. Alas! he's mad! ~~delaying~~ 105

Hamlet. Do you not come your tardy son to chide, ~~approve~~  
That laps'd in time and passion, lets go by neglect ~~rebut~~  
The important acting of your dread command?  
'I say

Ghost. Do not forget: this visitation  
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose. 110  
But, look! amazement on thy mother sits,  
'I step between her and her fighting soul;  
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works:  
Speak to her, Hamlet.

Hamlet. How is it with you,

Queen. Alas! how is 't with you, 115  
That you do bend your eye on vacancy  
And with the incorporeal air do hold discours  
Forth at your eyes your spirits widely peep;  
And, as the sleeping soldiers in the alarm,  
Your bedded hair, like life in excrements, 120  
Starts up and stands an end. O gentle son!  
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper  
Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?

*Queen.* Please speak no more. These words, like daggers, pierce my ears. No more, sweet Hamlet !

*Hamlet.* He is a murderer and villain, a slave, who is not even the twentieth part of a tenth of your previous lord ; he is just a clown among kings , a robber and a thief, who stole from a shelf the precious crown, and put it into his pocket.

*Queen.* No more please.

*Hamlet.* A king who is no more than a fool in motley—

*Enter GHOST*

Save me, and spread your wings over me, you heavenly angels ! What is the will of your gracious figure ?

*Queen.* Alas, he is mad.

*Hamlet.* Do you come to reprove your slow-moving son, who, having given way to the idle fit of passion, omits to carry out your solemn command ? Oh, say what your will is,

(Page 144. Lines 86—108)

*Ghost.* Do not forget I have come to sharpen your purpose which is getting dull. But look, your mother is distracted with fancies : shield her from her amazement. Imagination has the greatest sway upon a nervous, weak person. Speak to her ; Hamlet.

*Hamlet.* What is the matter with you, lady ?

*Queen.* Alas, how are you ? You seem to gaze upon the vacant air, and hold conversation with the bodiless air. Your eyes seem to shoot out of their sockets, and as sleeping soldiers started by an alarm, your matted hair, as if instinct with life, starts up and stands on end. O gentle son, bring your distracted passion under the control of patience. On what object did you look ?



*Hamlet* On him, on him! Look you, how pale he  
glares! <sup>look</sup> His form and cause conjoin'd, <sup>appealing</sup> preaching to stones, 125  
 Would make them capable Do not look upon me;  
 Lest with this piteous action you convert  
 My stern effects, then what I have to do <sup>what shall I do</sup>  
 Will want true <sup>avowed motive</sup> colour; tears perchance for blood.

*Queen* To whom do you speak this?

*Hamlet* Do you see nothing there?

*Queen* Nothing at all; yet all that is I see. 131

*Hamlet* Nor did you nothing hear?

*Queen.* No, nothing but ourselves.

*Hamlet* Why, look you there! look, how it steals away  
 My father, in his habit as he liv'd, dress  
 Look! where he goes, even now, out at the portal. 135

*unwakin* [Exit Ghost.]

*Queen.* This is the very coinage of your brain:  
 This bodiless creation ecstasy, <sup>madness</sup>  
 Is very cunning in <sup>skillful</sup>

*Hamlet* Ecstasy! <sup>Madness normally</sup>  
 My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time, 140  
 And makes as healthful music It is not madness

That I have utter'd - bring me to the test,  
 And I the matter will re-word, which madness  
 Would gambol from Mother, for love of grace,  
 Lay not that flattering unction to your soul, <sup>outward</sup> 145

That not your trespass but my madness speaks; <sup>Sins</sup>  
 It will but skin and film the ulcerous place, <sup>trick</sup>  
 Whiles rank corruption, mining all within, <sup>keeping inside</sup>  
 Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven;

Repent what's past, avoid what is to come; 150  
 And do not spread the compost on the weeds <sup>manure</sup>

To make them ranker Forgive me this my virtue;  
 For in the fatness of these purvey times <sup>out of condition or order</sup>  
 Virtue itself/ of vice must pardon beg,

Yea curb and woo for leave to do him good, Vice. 155

*Queen.* / O Hamlet! thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

*Hamlet.* On him, on him ! Look, with what a pale and ghastly look he stares at us ! His figure and cause combined, appealing to stones, would give them power to act. Do not look upon me, lest with your pathetic looks you change my harsh purpose ; then what I have to perform will lack its real motive, and perhaps I shall be enforced to shed tears in place of blood.

*Queen.* To whom are you speaking this ?

*Hamlet.* Do you not see anything there ?

*Queen.* I see none else than ourselves.

*Hamlet.* Why, look there ! look, how it is softly moving away ! My father in the very clothes he wore when he was alive. Look, where he goes, even now, out at the gate.

[Exit Ghost]

(Page 146 Lines 10)—135)

*Queen.* This is the very invention of your brain. Madness shows an aptness in creating such phantoms.

*Hamlet.* Madness ! My pulse beats as normally as yours, and it is as good a sign of sanity in me as in you. Do not suppose that what I have spoken, is the speech of a madman. Put me to the test, and I will repeat what I have said, which madness will deviate from. Mother, if you care for the mercy of heaven, do not flatter yourself with delusion that not your sin but my madness makes me speak thus. It can but superficially cover the ulcer of your soul while it goes deep inside and infects the whole system. Confess your sin to God ; repent what you have done, refrain from further sinning in future, and do not nurse it to make it grow more wanton. Let me ask forgiveness of you, for in these foul times virtue must apologise to vice, and solicit permission to reform the latter.

*Queen.* O Hamlet, you have cut my heart in two. . . .

*Hamlet.* O' throw away the worser part of it,  
 And live the purer with the other half  
 Good night; but go not to mine uncle's bed;  
 Assume a virtue, if you have it not 160  
 That monster, custom, who all sense doth  
 Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,  
 That to the use of actions fair and good  
 He likewise gives a frock or livery, ~~that~~  
 That aptly is put on. Refrain to night; 165  
 And that shall lend a kind of easiness  
 To the next abstinence the next more easy;  
 For use almost can change the stamp of nature, *unequal*  
 And exorcise the devil or throw him out  
 With wondrous potency Once more, good night; 170  
 And when you are desirous to be bless'd,  
 I'll blessing beg of you. For this same lord,

[Pointing to POLONIUS.]

I do repent but heaven ha'h pleas'd it so,  
 To punish me with this, and this with me,  
 That I must be their scourge and minister. *whip or instrument* 175  
 I will bestow him, and will answer well  
 The death I gave him So, again, good night  
 I must be cruel only to be kind:  
 Thus bad begins and worse remains behind.  
 One word more, good lady

*Queen.* What shall I do? 180

*Hamlet.* No this, by no means, that I bid you do:  
 Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed;  
 Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse; *darling*  
 And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses, *filthy*  
 Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd figures, 185  
 Make you to ravel all this matter out, *curst fingers*  
 That I essentially am not in madness  
 But mad in craft: 'Twere good you let him know,  
 For who that's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,  
 Would from a paddock, from a tat, a gib, 190  
 Such dear concernings hide? who would do so?

*Hamlet.* Throw away the worse part of it, and live a purer life with the other half of your heart. Good night Do not go to my uncle's bed. Put on virtue, if you have no virtue. Custom which as a monster eats up all sensibility, and as our evil genius, confirms in us our habits, is a good angel in this particular matter that if we follow the deeds of virtue, custom will give us a facility or aptitude to adopt and practise virtue. Keep away from my uncle to night, and next time it will make it easier for you

(Page 148. Lines 135—165)

to do it again ; the next time still easier and so on. Deliberate practice can almost alter the original tendency of nature and either overcome the wickedness in us, or cast it out, so marvellous is its power. Once more, good night. And when you desire to be blessed (by Heaven : & when you repent, I shall beg blessing of you, As for this lord

[Pointing to Polonius

I am very sorry, but it seems to be the will of God that I shall be the instrument of his death—so while he is punished for his meddlingness, I am made to suffer in spirit for having killed him I shall put him away somewhere, and accept all responsibility for his death. So good night again, I must be cruel so that I may be kind (meaning nothing but good to you). This is but the beginning, and things still worse are to come. One word more, good lady.

*Queen.* What shall I do ?

- *Hamlet* Not certainly I am asking you to do this : let the drunken king tempt you to bed again ; caress your cheek, call you darling ; and let him, for a foul kiss or two, or tickling your neck with his curved fingers, make you confess everything to him—that I am not really mad, but mad for a crafty purpose. It would be good if you let him know, for who that is a queen, fair, temperate, and sensible, would withhold matters of such vital interest to the king from one who is a toad, a bat, or atom cat ? A queen could not but do this. In defiance of all sense and secrecy, take down the

No, in despite of sense and seorecy,  
Unpeg the basket on the house's top,  
 Let the birds fly, and, like the famous ape,  
 To try conclusions, in the basket creep, 195  
 And break your own neck down.

Queen Be thou assur'd, if words be made of breath,  
 And breath of life, I have no life to breathe *mummr*  
 What thou hast said to me.

Hamlet I must to England, you know that?

Queen *decided* Alack! 200  
 I had forgot 'tis so concluded on.

Hamlet There's letters seal'd, and my two school-  
 fellows, *a kind of snake who have got poison on their teeth*  
 Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd, *clean my way*  
 They bear the mandate, they must sweep my way,  
 And marshal me to knavery. Let it work, *about it*  
 For 'tis the sport to have the engineer *Schemer*  
Hoist with his own petar and 't shall go hard *bomb*  
 But I will delve one yard below their mines, *dig*  
 And blow them at the moon O! 'tis most sweet,  
 When in one line who crafts directly meet. 210  
 This man shall set me packing; *hastur's*  
 I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room *dead body*  
 Mother, good-night Indeed this counsellor  
 Is now most still, most secret, and most grave,  
 Who was in life a foolish prating knave. *garrulous*. 215  
 Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.  
 Good-night, mother. *before of you*

[*Exeunt severally, HAMLET tugging in POLONIUS.*]

basket, and carry it to the top of the house, and let the birds fly, and then like the proverbial ape,

(Page 150 Lines 166—193)

to make experiments, creep into the basket, and break your neck by crashing down

*Queen* Let me tell you that if words are made of breath and if breath is the very essence of life I have not the life to murmur what you have told me.

*Hamlet.* Do you know that I have got to go to England ?

*Hamlet.* Alas, I forget about it ; it has been so decided.

*Hamlet* The letters have been sealed for that purpose ; any my two school fellows whom I can no more trust than toothed serpents, bear the commission. They will clear the way before me and lead me to the deed of wickedness Let the plan go ahead. It is good fun to destroy the contriver of a plot with his own design. It will be the worse for me if I cannot dig deeper (lay a deeper counter-plot) and blow them to pieces It is a great pleasure when two crafty fellows plot against each other. This dead fellow will make it necessary for me to depart in haste (or to plot) I will drag the dead body into the next room. Mother, good night. Indeed, this counsellor is quiet for ever, will reveal no secret, and looks most solemn ; while he was alive, he was a foolish, garrulous fellow. Come, sir, let me dispose of you. Good night. mother.

## ACT IV

## Scene I. A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Enter KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN.

King There's matter in these sighs, <sup>long drawn by</sup> these profound  
heaves.

You must translate, 'tis <sup>proper that we should</sup> fit we understand them

Where is your son?

Queen [*To ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*] Bestow  
this place on us a little while

[*Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*]

Ah! my good lord, what have I seen to night. 5,

King What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

Queen Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend  
Which is the mightier. In his lawless fit,  
Behind the arras hearing something stir,  
Whips out his rapier, cries, 'A rat! a rat!  
And, in his brainish apprehension, kills  
The unseen good old man

King. O heavy deed!

It had been so with us had we been there.

His liberty is full of threats to all,

To you yourself, to us, to every one. *accounted for* 15

Alas! how shall this bloody deed be answer'd?

It will be laid to us, whose *providence foresight*

Should have kept short, restrain'd and out of *haunt,*

This mad young man - but so much was our love,

We would not understand what was most fit, 20

But, like the owner of a foul disease,

To keep it from *divulging*, let it feed to *make known*

Even on the *pith* of life Where is he gone? *vitality*

Queen To draw apart the body he hath kill'd;

O'er whom his very madness, *like some ore* 25

Among a *mineral of metals* base,

Shows itself pure: he weeps for what is done

King. O Gertrude! come away

The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch

## ACT IV.

## SCENE I. A room in the castle.

*Enter KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*

*King.* There must be something serious denoted by your long-drawn sighs. Say what they mean. It is proper that we should know. Where is your son?

(Page 152. Lines 194—216 ACT IV SC. I. Lines 1—3.)

*Queen.* Will you please leave us alone for a while?

*[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern]*

*King.* Ah, my lord, I can hardly tell what I have seen to night.

*Queen.* What, Gertrude? How is Hamlet doing?

*Queen.* He is as mad as the sea and wind, when they contend with each other for supremacy. In his fit of madness he hears something move behind the arras, pulls out his rapier, and cries "A rat," and in a headstrong impulse kills the unseen good old man.

*King.* What a grievous crime! If I had been there, it might have befallen me. His liberty is full of danger to us all—to you yourself, to me, and to everybody else. Alas, how shall this bloody crime be accounted for? We shall be held responsible for it, for we should have exercised our foresight in restraining the liberty of this young man and keeping him out of public resort; but we were so blinded by love that we would not understand what was the proper thing to do in the circumstances. But we acted, as the sufferer of a foul disease does acts in keeping it concealed and letting it sap his vitals. Where is he gone? *Draw away*

*Queen.* To drag off the dead body of Polonius whom he has killed. He bewails his death which shows that there is something good in him in spite of his madness, revealing some precious ore among baser metals.

(Page 152. Lines 4—26)

*King.* O Gertrude, come away, before the sun shall ascend the mountain summit, we shall send him away in a ship from here. And in the meantime we must, with all



But we will ship him hence: and this vile deed 30  
We must, with all our majesty and skill,  
Both countenance and excuse. Ho! Guildenstern!

*Re enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*  
Friends both, go join you with some further aid:  
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,  
And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd him: 35  
Go seek him out, speak fair, and bring the body:  
Into the chapel I pray you, haste in this

*[Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.]*  
Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends;  
And let them know both what we mean to do,  
And what's untimely done: so, haply, slander,  
Who-e whisper o'er the world's diameter,  
As level as the cannon to his blank mark  
Transports his poison'd shot, may miss our name,  
And hit the woundless air. O! come away; 41  
My soul is full of discord and dismay. *Troubled [Exeunt.]*

Scene II. ANOTHER ROOM IN THE SAME

*Enter HAMLET.*

Hamlet. Safely stowed. *Put away Fear*  
Rosencrantz } *[Within]* Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!  
Guildenstern. }

Hamlet. What noise? who calls on Hamlet?

O! here they come

*Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*

Rosencrantz. What have you done, my lord, with the 5  
dead body?

Hamlet. Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

Rosencrantz. Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it  
thence

And bear it to the chapel.

Hamlet. Do not believe it.

Rosencrantz. Believe what? 10

Hamlet. That I can keep your counsel and not mine  
own. Besides, to be demanded of a sponge! what replica-  
tion should be made by the son of a king?

sovereign power and tact, gloss over the crime. Ho, Guildenstern.

*Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*

Friends both, go and enlist the help of some other people. Hamlet in a fit of madness has killed Polonius, and dragged away the dead body from his mother's room; Go and find him out, speak gently to him, and bring the dead body into the chapel. I pray you, act promptly.

*[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern]*

Come, Gertrude, we shall summon our wisest friends and counsellors, and tell them what we intend to do about the accident that has happened, so, perhaps, slanderous gossip, which spreads quickly and everywhere, and never misses its aim, may not touch our names, and waste itself on the invulnerable air. Come with me, my spirit is troubled, and and full of fear. *[Exeunt]*

Scene II. *Another room in the castle.*

*Enter HAMLET*

*Hamlet.* The dead body had been safely put away.

*Rosencrantz, Guildenstern.* *[Within]* Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!

*Hamlet.* What noise is this? Who calls on Hamlet? Here they come.

*Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*

*Rosencrantz.* What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

(Page 154. Lines 27—45. Sc. II. Lines 1—5)

*Hamlet.* I have mixed it with dust because it is made of dust

*Rosencrantz.* Tell us where it is that we may remove it to the chapel.

*Hamlet.* Do not believe it.

*Rosencrantz.* Believe what?

*Hamlet.* That I can follow your counsel and not keep my own. Further, to be demanded by a sponge (tale-bearer)! What reply should be made by the son of a king?

*Rosencrantz.* Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

*Hamlet.* Ay, sir, that soaks up the king's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the king best service in the end: he keeps them, like an ape, in the corner of his jaw; first mouthed, to be last swallowed: when he needs what you have gleaned it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again.

*Rosencrantz.* I understand you not, my lord.

*Hamlet.* I am glad of it. a knaveish speech sleeps in a foolish ear. *Subtle*

*Rosencrantz.* My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the king. 26

*Hamlet.* The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing—

*Guildenstern.* A thing, my lord!

*Hamlet.* Of nothing. bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after a king of shreds and patches [Ereunt.]

Scene III. ANOTHER ROOM IN THE SAME

*Enter KING, attended*

*King.* I have sent to seek him, and to find the body. How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!

Yet must not we put the strong law on him:

He's lov'd of the distracted multitude, *receiving help*

Who like not in their judgment, but their eyes; *compuls*

And where 'tis so, the offender's scourage is weigh'd,

But never the offence To bear all smooth and even,

This sudden sending him away must seem

Deliberate pause: diseases desperate grown incurable

By desperate appliance are reliev'd,

Or not at all.

*Enter ROSENCRANTZ.*

How now! what hath befall'n?

*Rosencrantz.* Where the dead body is bestow'd, my lord,

We cannot get from him

*King.*

But where is he?

*Rosencrantz.* Do you take me for sponge?

*Hamlet.* What else are you? A sponge is that which absorbs the king's favour, his rewards and his authority. But such officers serve the king best in the long run: he keeps them, as an ape keeps nuts in the corner of his jaw; they are first munched and then swallowed. If he needs to get what you have picked up, he will but squeeze you, and leave you dry (without information).

*Rosencrantz.* I cannot catch your meaning, my lord.

*Hamlet.* I am glad to hear it. A subtle speech is incomprehensible to a foolish ear.

*Rosencrantz.* My lord, you must tell where the body is and go with us to the king.

*Hamlet.* The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing—

*Guildenstern.* A thing, my lord!

*Hamlet.* A thing of nothing, bring me to him, Hide fox, and all after.

[*Exeunt*]

Scene III. *Another room in the castle*

*Enter KING, attended*

*King.* I have sent men to find him, and to find the dead body. How dangerous it is that this man is at large;

(Page 156. Lines 6—30 Sc. III Lines 1—2)

Yet we cannot put the law in motion against him. He is very popular with the senseless multitude, whose liking depends on their eyes, not on their judgement, and when such is the case the punishment of the offender, and not his offence, is seriously considered. To manage things smoothly, the sudden sending him away must be made to appear as an act of deliberate consideration. Diseases which have grown about incurable, must be cured by violent remedies, or they are not cured at all.

*Enter ROSENCRANTZ*

How now, what has happened?

*Rosencrantz.* My lord, we cannot get him to tell where the dead body is hidden.

*King.* But where is he?

*Rosencrantz.* Without, my lord; guarded, to know your pleasure

*King.* Bring him before us. 15

*Rosencrantz.* Ho, Guildenstern! bring in my lord

*Enter HAMLET and GUILDENSTERN.*

*King.* Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

*Hamlet.* At supper

*King.* At supper? Where?

*Hamlet.* Not where he eats, but where he is eaten 20  
a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him  
Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all  
creature else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots:  
your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable ser-  
vice, two dishes, but to one table. that's the end 25

*King.* Alas, alas!

*Hamlet.* A man may fish with the worm that hath eat  
of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

*King.* What does thou mean by this?

*Hamlet.* Nothing, but to show you how a king may  
go a progress through the guts of a beggar 31

*King.* Where is Polonius?

*Hamlet.* In heaven, send thither to see if your mes-  
senger find him not there, seek him i' the other place  
yourself. But, indeed, if you find him not within this  
month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into  
the lobby. *Smell him* 36

*King* [To some Attendants] Go seek him there.

*Hamlet.* He will stay till you come

[*Exeunt Attendants.*]

*King.* Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,  
Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve 40  
For that which thou hast done, must send thee hence  
With hery quickness: therefore prepare thyself;  
The bark is ready, and the wind at help, *Ship*  
The associates tend, and every thing is bent  
For England.

*Hamlet.* For England!

*Rosencrantz.* He is, my lord waiting outside under guard, to know what you want to do with him.

*King.* Bring him before us

*Rosencrantz.* Ho, Guildenstern ! bring in my lord.

*Enter HAMLET and GUILDENSTERN*

*King.* Now, Hamlet, where is Polonius ?

*Hamlet.* He is at supper.

*King.* At supper ! Where ?

*Hamlet.* Not where he eats, but where he is eaten : a certain council of political worms are working at him. The worm feeds like an emperor ; we fatten all creatures so that we may fatten on them, and we fatten ourselves so that worms may feed on us. The fat king and the lean beggar are but two different dishes on the same table for worms. That is the end of the matter

*King.* What a pity !

(Page 158. Lines 3—26)

*Hamlet.* A man may fish with the worm that has fed on a king, and eat the fish that has swallowed that worm.

*King.* What do you mean by this ?

*Hamlet.* It is just to show you how a king may complete his journey through a beggar.

*King.* Where is Polonius ?

*Hamlet.* In heaven ; send your men to see if he is not there. If your messenger does not find him there, you may yourself seek him in hell. But indeed, if you do not find him within this month, you will smell him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

*King.* Go and seek him there, [To some attendants.]

*Hamlet.* He will stay there till you go.

[*Exeunt Attendants*]

*King.* Hamlet, this deed, for the sake of your own safety which we hold dear, as we grieve for what you have done—makes it necessary to send you from here as quickly as possible. Therefore, get ready, the ship is waiting, and wind the favourable ; your companions are waiting on you, and every arrangement has been completed for your voyage to England.

*Hamlet.* For England !

King

Ay, Hamlet.

Hamlet.

Good

45

King. So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.

Hamlet. I see a cherub that sees them. But, come; for England! Fare well, dear mother

King. Thy loving father, Hamlet.

49

Hamlet. My mother father and mother is man and wife, man and wife is one flesh, and so, my mother Come for England! [Exit.]

King. Follow him at foot, tempt him with speed aboard:

Delay it not, I'll have him hence to night.

Away! for every thing is seal'd and done

55

That else leans on the affair: pray you, make haste.*Connected* [Exit ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.]And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught,—*etiam*

As my great power thereof may give thee sense,

Since yet thy cicatrices looks raw and red *Scar left*

After the Danish sword, and thy free awe

Pays homage to us,—thou mayst not coldly set *me*Our sovereign process, which imports at full,

By letters congruing to that effect,

The present death of Hamlet Do it, England;

For like the hectic in my blood he rages, *troubles me* 60And thou must cure me Till I know 'tis done,

Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun.

[Exit.]

Scene IV. A PLAIN IN DENMARK

Enter FORTINBRAS, a Captain, and Soldiers, marching.

Fortinbras Go, captain, from me greet the Danish king,

Tell him that, by his licence, Fortinbras permission

Claims the conveyance of a promis'd march

Over his kingdom You know the rendezvous 65

If that his majesty would aught with us,

We shall express our duty in his eye,

And let him know so.

Cap'tan.

I will do 't, my lord.

Fortinbras! Go softly on.

*King.* Yes, Hamlet.

*Hamlet.* That's good.

*King.* So it must be good, if you know what our intention was,

*Hamlet.* I am in communion with the angel who sees through your intention. All right, for England then! Farewell, dear mother.

*King.* Say farewell to your loving father.

*Hamlet.* My mother. Father and mother are man and wife; man wife is one flesh; so when I say my mother, both father and mother are included. Well, I am ready for England.

[Exit]

*King.* Follow him close; induce him to get aboard as quickly as possible. He must depart to night.

(Page 160. Lines 27—54)

Hurry up; letters are sealed, and every arrangement is completed for the voyage.

[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern]

And England, if you esteem my love—as you may do out of respect for my power, since you still bear the mark of the wound, inflicted by the Danish sword, and you pay homage to us out of fear and respect—you may not neglect my sovereign command, It implies by letters concurring in the same effect, the immediate death of Hamlet. Do it, England, for like the hectic fever he troubles me, and you must cure me. Till I know that it has been accomplished, whatever may happen, there can be little joy for me

Scene IV. A plain in Denmark,

Enter FORTINBRAS, a CAPTAIN and FORCES, marching

*Fortinbras.* Go, captain, carry my greetings to the Danish King. Tell him that by his permission, Fortinbras claims free passage for his soldiers, as promised, through his territory. You know where we are going to assemble. If his majesty desires any conference with me, I shall personally pay my respects to him, and you should tell him this.

*Captain.* I shall do it, my lord.

*Fortinbras.* Go slowly forward



[*Exeunt FORTINBRAS and Soldiers.*]

*Enter HAMLET, ROSENCRANZ, GUILDENSTERN &c.*

*Hamlet.* Good sir, whose powers are these?

*Captain.* They are of Norway, sir 10

*Hamlet.* How purpos'd, sir, I pray you?

*Captain.* Against some part of Poland

*Hamlet.* Who commands them, sir?

*Captain.* The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.

*Hamlet.* Goes it against the main of Poland, sir, 15  
Or for some frontier?

*Captain.* Truly to speak, Sir, and with <sup>exaggeration</sup> no addition,  
We go to gain a little patch of ground Plot

That hath in it no profit but the name

To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it Cultivate 20

Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole

A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee

*Hamlet.* Why, then the Polack never will defend it.

*Captain.* Yes, 'tis already garrison'd placed troops

*Hamlet.* Two thousand souls and twenty thousand  
ducats Scots

Will not debate the question of this straw; <sup>trifle</sup>

This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace

That inward breaks, and shows no cause without

Why the man dies. I humbly thank you, sir.

*Captain.* God be wi' you, sir [Exit.

*Rosencrantz.* Will 't please you go, my lord? do

*Hamlet.* I'll be with you straight Go a little before.

Circumstances [Exeunt all except HAMLET.

How all occasions do inform against me,

And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,

If his chief good and market of his time man 1

Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more,

Sure he that made us with such large discourse, 2

Looking before and after, gave us not

That capability and god like reason

To fast in us unus'd. Now, whe'r it be

Bestial oblivion, or some craver scruple 3

[*Exeunt Fortinbras and Forces.*]

(Page 162. Lines 55—67. Sc, IV. Lines 1—9)

*Enter HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and others.*

*Hamlet.* Good sir, whose forces are these ?

*Captain.* They are of Norway, sir.

*Hamlet.* How are they going to be employed, I pray you ?

*Captain.* Against some part of Poland.

*Hamlet.* Who commands these troops, sir ?

*Captain.* The nephew to the old king of Norway, Fortinbras.

*Hamlet.* Are they proceeding against the main part of Poland or some frontier ?

*Captain.* To speak the truth, sir, and without exaggeration, we are going to gain a little plot. There is no profit in gaining it, but it is a matter of prestige. Even to pay five ducats, I would not bother to farm it. Nor would it yield <sup>silver</sup> to Norway or to Poland a higher rate, if it were sold.

*Hamlet.* It seems to me then that the Poles will not defend it.

*Captain.* The Poles have placed troops in the station.

*Hamlet.* Two thousand creature and twenty thousand ducats (which may be spent either on attacking or defending) are not enough to settle this trifle of a dispute. This is the result of accumulation of wealth and of long continued peace, which eats into society and yet reveal no cause of its decay and destruction. I thank you humbly, sir.

*Captain.* Good bye [Exit]

*Rosencrantz.* Will you please go, my lord ?

*Hamlet.* You may go ahead ; I shall join you presently.

*Exeunt all except Hamlet.*

How all circumstances bear evidence against me and supply incentive to my revenge. What is a man if all his business is to eat and sleep ?

(Page 162, Lines 9—34)

# HAMLET

*analysis*

If thinking too precisely on the event,  
 A thought, which quarrel'd, hath but one part wisdom,  
 And ever three parts coward, I do not know  
 Why yet I live to say 'This thing' to do,  
 Sith I have cause and will and strength and means 4  
 To do't. Examples gross as earth ethort me  
 Witness this army of such mass and charge  
 Led by a delicate and tender prince, *you*  
 Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd  
 Makes mouths at the invisible event,  
 Exposing what is mortal and unsure  
 To all that fortune, death and danger dare,  
 Even for an egg shell. Rightly to be great  
 Is not to stir without great argument, *man*  
 But greatly to find quarrel in a straw  
 When honour's at the stake. How stand I *now,*  
 That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd, *do*  
Excitements of my reason and my blood,  
 And let all sleep, while, to my shame, I see  
 The immment death of twenty thousand men. 6  
 That, for a fantasy and trick of fame, *shade*  
 Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot  
 Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,  
 Which is not tomb enough and continent *Cover*  
 To hide the slain? O! from this time forth, 6  
 My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth! *Exit*

Scene V. ELXINORE A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Enter QUEEN, HORATIO, and a Gentleman.

Queen. I will not speak with her.

Gentleman. She is importunate, indeed distract:  
 Her mood will needs be pitied.

Queen. What would she have?

Gentleman. She speaks much of her father; says she  
 hears *class*

There's tricks i' the world, and hems, and beats he  
 heart;

Spurns enviously at straws; speaks things in doubt,

He is a beast, and no more, Surely, he who endowed us with reason and foresight, did not give us understanding and reason to rust in us unused. Now whether it is beastly forgetfulness, or some faint-hearted squeamishness, leading me to scan too minutely the consequences of action—a process of thinking which analysed, shows itself to be little wise and far more timid, I do not know why I live to say, "This thing is yet to be done," since I have the necessary motive, will and energy and resources to execute it. Quite common and obvious examples urge me. Take this army, so solid and strong led by a young prince, whose spirit, spurred by ambition, makes little of the uncertain issue, putting all that is frail and mortal to the risks of chance, death and danger, this enterprise being made for a small plot of land. True greatness to find the cause of quarrel in a trivial issue which involves honour, and does not mean moving to action for a great cause. Look at my position then: I have a father killed, a mother seduced, which should excite both my reason and passion; yet I am doing nothing, while I see, with shame, twenty thousand men going to face imminent death for the shadow and illusion of fame, and fight for a plot which is too small to accomodate the numbers

(Page 162. Lines 35—68)

or to entomb the slain. Henceforth let my thoughts be bloody, or worthless. [Exit.

Scene V. *Elsinore. A room in the castle*

Enter QUEEN, HORATIO, and a GENTLEMAN

Queen I shall not speak with her.

Gentleman. She begs an interview very earnestly: she is beside herself. None but will pity the mood she is in.

Queen. What does she desire?

Gentleman. She speaks much of her father, and says she hears that there is foul play in the world, and glears her throar and strikes her breast, kicks, petulantly at straws, speaks things in doubtful meaning, which seem to carry a vague sense. Her speech seems to mean nothing, yet her

That carry but half sense her speech is nothing,  
 Yet the unshaped use of it doth move  
 The hearers to collection; they aim at it, *meaning*  
 And hatch the words up to their own thoughts, 10  
 Which, as her winks, and nods, and gestures yield them,  
 Indeed would make one think there might be thought,  
 Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily. *father*

*Horatio.* 'Twere good she were spoken with, for she  
 in my street

Dangerous conjectures in ill brooding minds. 15

*Queen.* Let her come in. *[Exit Gentleman]*

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,  
 Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss:—  
 So full of artless jealousy, guilt,  
 It spills itself in fearing to be spilt. *And you would* 20

*Re enter Gentleman, with OPHELIA.*

*Queen.* *Ophelia* Where is the beautiful majesty of Denmark?

*Queen* How now, *Ophelia*!

*Ophelia* *[Sings]*

How should I your true love know

From another one?

By his cockle hat and staff, *Big game's hat*

And his sandal shoon.

*Queen* Alas! sweet lady, what imports this song?

*Ophelia* Say you? nay, pray you, mark.

He is dead and, gone, lady,

He is dead and gone,

At his head a grass-green turf;

At his heels a stone

O, ho!

*Queen* Nay, but *Ophelia*,—

*Ophelia* Pray you, mark

White his shroud as the mountain snow,—

*Enter KING.*

*Queen.* Alas! look here, my lord.

*Ophelia*

Larded all with sweet flowers;

incoherent words induce the hearers to guess the meaning—and they at least get the words to mean what they think ; and as her words are accompanied by winks, nods and gestures, they make one think that there must be some meaning in them, though nothing definite, yet something very pathetic.

*Horatio.* It would be good if you spoke to her, for she may infect suspicious minds with guesses that may prove dangerous.

*Queen.* Let her come in. [Exit Horatio]

To my oppressed soul, as sin is apt to torment one with such fancies, each trifle seems to be charged with some evil. Guilt is so full of suspicion ill concealed that it courts its doom in the very act of feigning to betray itself.

(Page 166 Lines 64—66. Sc. V. Lines 1—20)

*Re enter HORATIO, with OPHELIA.*

*Ophelia.* Where is the beautiful majesty of Denmark ?

*Queen.* How now, Ophelia !

*Ophelia.* (Sings) How should I distinguish a true lover from a false one ? Certainly by his pilgrim's hat and staff, and his sandal shoes

*Queen.* Alas, sweet lady, what does this song mean !

*Ophelia.* You ask me that ? Then please listen.

(Sings) He is dead and gone, lady, the place where his head rests is marked by a green turf, and a stone marks the place where his heels rest.

*Queen.* Nay, but, Ophelia—

*Ophelia.* Please listen to me.

(Sings) His shroud is as white as the mountain snow—

*Enter KING*

*Queen.* Alas, look here, my lord.

*Ophelia.* [Sings] Stuck out with sweet flowers, which

Which bewept to the grave did not go  
With true-love showers: *How now?* 40

*King.* How do you, pretty lady?

*Ophelia.* Well, God 'ild you! They say the owl was  
a baker's daughter. Lord! we know what we are, but  
know not what we may be. God be at your table!

*King.* Conceit upon her father.

*Ophelia.* Pray you, let's have no words of this; but  
when they ask you what it means, say you this:

To morrow is Saint Valentine's day,  
All in the morning betime, ~~early~~  
And I a maid at your window, 50  
To be your Valentine.  
Then up he rose, and down'd his clothes,  
And dunn'd the chamber door;  
Let in the maid, that out a maid  
Never departed more 55

*King.* Pretty Ophelia!

*Oph.* Indeed, la! without an oath, I'll make an end  
on't:

By Gis and by Saint Charity,  
Alack, and fie for shame!  
Young man will do't, if they come to't; 60  
By Cock they are to blame  
Quoth she, before you tumbled me,  
You promis'd me to wed;

(He answers)

So would I ha' done, by yonder sun,  
And thou hadst not come to my bed. 65

*King.* How long hath she been thus?

*Ophelia.* I hope all will be well. We must be patient  
but I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay  
him in the cold ground. My brother shall know of it 70  
and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my  
coach! Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies;  
good night, good night [Exit.]

accompanied him to the grave mourning, and showered tears of true love.

*King.* How are you, pretty lady !

*Ophelia.* Well, God bless you ! They say the baker's daughter was turned into an owl. Well, we know what we are, but do not know what we may be. May God bless your table !

*King.* Brooding on her father.

*Ophelia.* I pray you, let us have no more of this ; but when they ask you what it means, you may say this :

[*Sings*] To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day, and all early in the morning,

(Page 168. Lines 21—48)

And I, a maiden, shall be standing at your window to be your Valentine.

*King.* Pretty Ophelia ! How long has she been thus ?

*Ophelia.* I hope all will turn out well. We must have patience, I cannot help weeping to think they should lay him in the cold ground. My brother shall know of it, and so I thank you for your good advice. Let my coach come Good night, sweet ladies ; good night.

[*Exit*]



King Follow her close, give her good watch, I pray  
you. *[Exit HORATIO.]*

O! this is the poison of deep grief, it springs 75  
All from her father's death O Gertrude, Gertrude!  
When sorrows come, they come not single spies,  
But in battalions First, her father slain;  
Next, your son gone, but he most violent author  
Of his own just remove the people muddied, 80  
Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers,  
For good Polonius' death, and we have done but greenly,  
In hugging mugger to inter him; poor Ophelia  
Divided from herself and her fair judgment, 85  
Without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts:  
Last, and as much containing as all these,  
Her brother is in secret come from France, swears  
Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,  
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear with whispers,  
With pestilent speeches of his father's death; 90  
Wherein necessity, of matter beggar'd,  
Will nothing stick our person to arraign  
In ear and ear O may dear Gertrude! this,  
Like to a murdering piece, in many places  
Gives me superfluous death *[A noise within.]*

Queen.

Alack! what noise is this? 95

*Enter a Gentleman.*

King Where are my Switzers? Let them guard the  
door. *Switzers*

What is the matter?

Gentleman Save yourself, my lord: *blush*  
The ocean, overpeering of his list,  
Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste  
Than young Laertes in a riotous head, *mull*  
O'erbears your officers The rabble call him lord,  
And, as the world were now but to begin,  
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,  
The rubbers and props of every word *uphold*  
They cry, 'Choose we, Laertes shall be king!' 105

*King.* Follow her close ; keep a good watch over her, I pray.

[*Exit Horatio*]

Oh, this the tragic result of deep grief, it is caused by her father's death. O Gertrude, when troubles come, they do not come singly, but in a multitude. First her father slain, and next your son gone, and it is for his violent deed that it has been necessary to remove him ; the people are confused, and entertain dark suspicions about the death of Polonius, and all that we have done is to bury him uncere- moniously ; poor Ophelia is gone crazy and void of reason, and when we are bereft of reason, we are mere pictures or beasts ; and lastly, no less important than all these circum- stances, his brother has come back secretly from France, is listening to incredible things which amaze him, and reveals none of his designs. and there are people ready enough to pour into his ears dark whispers about his father's death, and in this matter, since there is no substantial ground of accusation against us, they will not hesitate to invent things and spread them from ear to ear. "On, my Gertrude,

(Page 170 Lines 49—77)

this, like a piece of artillery loaded with case shot, lac- erates me with many wounds.

[*A noise within.*]

*Queen.* Alas what noise is that ?

*King.* Where are my body guards ? Let them guard the door.

*Enter a GENTLEMAN*

What is the matter ?

*Gentleman* Save yourself, my lord. More quickly than the ocean flooding the shore, swallows up the low lying lands young Laertes, at the head of a riotous crowd, overpowers your officers. The multitude call him lord, and as if the world were to begin anew, all ancient usages and tradition being forgotten which alone can confirm, and give sanction to, every word, they shout, "we choose Laertes, he shall be

Caps hands, and tongues, applaud in to the clouds;

'Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!' *back*

Queen How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!  
O' this is counter, you false Danish dogs! 109

King The doors are broke. [Noise within]

*Enter LAERTES armed; Danes following.*

Laertes Where is the king? Sirs, stand you all without

Danes. No, let's come in

Laertes. I pray you, give me leave.

Danes We will, we will [*They retire without the door.*]

Laertes. I thank you: keep the door, O thou vile king!  
Give me my father

Queen Calmly, good Laertes. 115

Laertes That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me -  
bastard,

Cries cuckold to my father, brands the harlot

Even here, between the chaste unsmirched brows

Of my true mother.

King What is the cause, Laertes,  
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like? 120

Let him go, Gertrude; do not fear our person.

There's such divinity doth hedge a king, *Protect*

That treason can but peep to what it would,

Acts little of his will Tell me, Laertes,

Why thou art thus incens'd. Let him go, Gertrude. 124  
*offended*

Laertes. Where is my father?

King. Dead

Queen But not by him.

King Let him demand his fill

Laertes How came he dead? I'll not be *but at* juggled with  
To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!

Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit! *never* 130

I dare damnation To this point I stand,

That both the worlds I give to negligence,

Let come what comes; only I'll be reveng'd

Most thoroughly for my father

*I am ready a week hell.*

our king". They throw up their caps, clap their hands and shout, "Laertes shall be king."

*Queen.* How they will pursue with a ringing cry a wrong trail! You Danish dogs, you are off the scent.

*King.* The doors are broken. [Noise within.]

*Enter LAERTES, armed, DANES following.*

*Laertes.* Where is the king? Gentleman, wait outside.

*Danes.* No, let us come in.

*Laertes.* I pray you, let me deal with the king.

*Danes* Yes, yes. [*They retire without the door*]

*Laertes.* I thank you; guard the door. Oh, you wicked king, give me my father.

*Queen.* Soft, good Laertes.

(Page 172. Lines 78—100)

*Laertes.* Any patience on my part will show me a bastard, prove my father a cuckold, and brand my mother a harlot.

*King.* What is the cause, Laertes, that may breed so stupendous a revolt? Do not hold him, Gertrude; have no fear about my safety. The divine grace protects a king so that treason can but contemplate, but actually do no harm to him. Tell me, Laertes, why are you so mightily offended. Release him, Gertrude. Tell me, man.

*Laertes.* Where is my father?

*King.* Dead.

*Queen.* But the king is not responsible for his death.

*King.* Let him ask me everything till he is satisfied.

*Laertes.* How did he happen to die? I will not be put off with an evasive answer. Let all vows of allegiance and fidelity go to hell, so I banish conscience and mercy. I am prepared to risk hell. I stand on this point: I defy both the worlds—let whatever may happen—I will have full satisfaction and revenge for my father's death.

*King.* Who shall stay you ?

*Laertes.* My will, not all the world.  
And for my means, I'll husband them so well, <sup>135</sup> *rule or manage*  
They shall go far with little

*King.* Good Laertes,

If you desire to know the certainty  
Of your dear father's death, is't writ in your revenge,  
That, swoopstake, you will draw both friend and foe, 140  
Winner and loser ?

*Laertes.* None but his enemies.

*King.* Will you know them then ?

*Laertes.* To his good friends thus wide I'll ope my  
arms ?

And like the kind life-rendering pelican, <sup>like a pelican</sup>  
Repay them with my blood

*King.* Why, now you speak 145

Like a good child and a true gentleman.  
That I am guiltless of your father's death,  
And am most sensibly in grief for it, !  
It shall as level to your judgment pierce  
As day does to your eye

*Danes.* [Within.] - Let her come in. 150

*Laertes.* How now ! what noise is that ?

*Re-enter OPHELIA*

O heat, dry up my brains ! tears seven times salt

Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye !

By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight

Till our scale ture the beam O rose of May !

Dear maid, kind sister sweet Ophelia !

O heavens ! is't possible a young maid's wit

Should be as mortal as an old man's life ?

Nature is fine in love, and where 'tis fine

It sends some precious instance of itself

After the thing it loves. 160

*Ophelia*

They bore him barefaced on the bier ;

Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny ;

*King.* None is going to prevent you.

*Laertes.* None but my will, but not all the world ; as for my resources I shall use them so carefully that however small they may be, they will carry me the farthest.

*King.* Good Laertes, if you desire to know how your father came by his death, is it prescribed by your revenge.

(Page 104. Lines 99—124)

that it will involve both friend and foe just as a gambler draws in the whole stake, whether he has won or lost ?

*Laertes.* I must have revenge upon his enemies alone.

*King.* Will you then know who these enemies are ?

*Laertes.* I will spread out my arms thus to his good friends, and like the pelican who nourishes her young on her own blood, I will feed them on my blood.

*King.* Now you speak like a good child and a true gentleman. That I am innocent of your father's death, and am most painfully affected by it, will be as plain to you as day light.

*Danes.* [Within] Let her come in.

*Laertes.* What noise is that ?

*Re enter OPHELIA*

Let my brains wither up in the heat of grief and the bitter tears blind my eye, I swear in the name of God I will exact the fullest revenge for your madness, O rose of May, Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia ! O God ! is it possible that a young maid's senses should be as frail as an old man's life ? Nature shows her delicate feelings in love, and where it is so, she sends some precious token of herself after the thing she loves.

*Ophelia.* [Sings] They bore him on the bier with his face uncovered ; hey non, nonny, nonny, hey nonny ; and

And in his grave rain'd many a tear,—  
Fare you well, my dove! *Laertes*

*Laertes.* Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade  
revenge,

It could not move thus *as strongly*

*Ophelia.*

You must sing a down a down,

And you call him a-down-a.

O how the wheel becomes it! It is the false steward that  
stole his master's daughter *remember* *171*

*Laertes.* This nothing's more than matter.

*Ophelia* There's rosemary, that's for remembrance,  
pray, love, remember: and there is pansies, that's for  
thoughts *my beloved brother*

*Laertes* A document in madness, thoughts and re-  
membrance fitted *the* *171*

*Ophelia* There's fennel for you, and columbines;  
there's rue for you, and here's some for me, we may  
call it herb of grace o' Sundays O! you must wear *180*  
your rue with a difference There's a daisy; I would  
give you some violets, but they withered all when my  
father died They say he made a good end,—

For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy

*Laertes.* Thought and affliction, passion, hell  
itself, *melancholy* *sorrow* *186*

She turns to favour and to prettiness.

*Ophelia.*

And will a' not come again?

And will a' not come again?

No, no, he is dead,

Go to thy death bed,

He never will come again

His beard was as white as snow,

All flaxen was his poll, *187*

He is gone, he is gone,

And we cast away moan:

God ha' mercy on his soul!

many tears were shed over his grave. Farewell, my Love !

*Laertes.* Had you but your senses, and did you urge revenge, you could not have moved me so profoundly.

(Page 172 Lines 125—152)

*Ophelia.* [Sings] You must sing a-down, a down if you call him a down a. How the spinning wheel and the song go together ! It is the false steward who stole his master's daughter.

*Laertes.* This nonsense is more persuasive than sense would have been.

*Ophelia.* There is rosemary ' which perpetuates memory ; pray you, love remember ; there are pansies, which are the symbol of thought.

*Laertes* Her madness is instructive, combining thought and remembrance.

*Ophelia.* There is the fennel for you and the columbine, there is rue for you, and here is some flower for me, we may call it herb of grace on Sundays : Oh, you must wear your rue with some mark of difference. There is a daisy, I would give you some violets, but they all withered when my father died. They say he died a peaceful death.

[Sing.] For beautiful sweet Robin is my joy—

*Laertes.* She touches everything with beauty and grace—thought, affliction, passion and the horror of hell itself.

*Ophelia.* [Sings] And will he not come again ? No, no, he is dead, go to your grave, he will never come again. His beard was as white as snow ; his head was all grey. He is gone, he is gone, and we mourn him in vain. Let God have



And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God be wi' ye!  
[Exit]

*Laertes* Do you see this, O God?

*King* Laertes, I must commune with your grief,  
Or you deny me right Go but apar', 200  
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,  
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me  
If by direct or by collateral hand *indirect*  
They find us touch'd, we will our kingdom give, *guiltily*  
Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours, 205  
To you in satisfaction. but if not,  
Be you content to lend your patience to us,  
And we shall jointly labour with your soul  
To give it due content

*Laertes.* Let this be so:  
His means of death, his obscure burial, 210  
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones  
No noble rite nor formal ostentation, *showing*  
Cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth  
That I must call it in question, *demand an el*

*King.* So you shall;  
And where the offence is let the great axe fall 215  
I pray you go with me [Exeunt.]

*Scene VI. ANOTHER ROOM IN THE SAME*

*Enter HORATIO and a Servant*

*Horatio.* What are they that would speak with me?

*Servant* Sailors, sir. they say, they have letters  
for you

*Horatio.* Let them come in. [Exit Servant.]  
I do not know from what part of the world  
I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet. 5

*Enter Sailors.*

*First Sailor.* God bless you, sir.

*Horatio.* Let him bless thee too.

*Second Sailor.* He shall, sir, an 't please him.  
There's a letter for you, sir,—it comes from the ambassa-

mercy on his soul, and on all Christian souls, I pray God Good bye.

*Laertes.* How can God see this and keep quiet ?

*King* Laertes, I am with you in your grief.

(Page 178. Lines 153—188)

Or you deny me my right to share in your grief. Depart and choose whomsoever of your wisest friends you will and let them hear and judge between you and me. If they find me guilty either directly or indirectly, I shall surrender my kingdom, my crown, my life and all that I call mine to satisfy your revenge. But if they do not find me guilty, may you be contented to listen to me patiently, and we shall jointly devise the best means of giving due satisfaction to your revenge.

*Laertes.* I agree to this. The manner of his death, his unknown burial—no memorial, sword nor shield over his bones, no proper ceremony, nor elaborate funeral show—these things need to be investigated publicly, as if the voice of heaven demands it ; so I must challenge these things

Scene VI. *Another room in the castle.*

*Enter HORATIO and a SERVANT.*

*Horatio.* What kind of men are they who want to speak with me ?

*Servant.* Sailors ; they say they bring letters for you.

*Horatio.* Let them come in.

[*Exit Servant*]

I do not know from what part of the world I should be addressed, if not by Hamlet.

*Enter SAILORS*

*First Sailor,* God bless you, sir.

*Horatio.* Let God bless you too.

" (Page 178 Lines 184—200 Sc. VI Lines 1—7)

*First Sailor* God shall, sir, if it please Him. There is a letter for you, sir ; it comes from the ambassador who was

dor thas was bound for England:—if your name be  
 Horatio, as I am let to know it is 11

*Horatio.* Horatio, when thou shalt have <sup>read the letter</sup> overlooked this, give  
 these fellows some means to the king they have letters for  
 him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very war-  
 like appointment gave us chase Finding ourselves too 15  
 slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour; in the grapple I  
 boarded them on the instant they got clear of our ship, so I  
 alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like  
 thieves of mercy, but they knew what they did, I am to do a  
 good turn for them. Let the king have the letters I have 20  
 sent, and repair thou to me with as much haste as thou wouldst  
 fly death I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee  
 dumb, yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter.  
 These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz  
 and Guildenstern hold their course for England; of them I 25  
 have much to tell thee Farewell

*He that thou knowest thine,*

*Hamlet,*

Come, I will give you way for these your letters; 30  
 And do 't the speedier, that you may direct me <sup>take me</sup>  
 To him from whom you brought them. [Exeunt.]

*Scene VII ANOTHER ROOM IN THE SAME*

*Enter KING and LAERTES*

*King* Now must your conscience my acquittance seal,  
 And you must put me in your heart for friend,  
 Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,  
 That he which hath your noble father slain  
 Pursu'd my life

*Laertes* It well appears: but tell me 5  
 Why you proceeded not against these feats-  
 So crimeful and so capital in nature,  
 As by your safety, wisdom, all things else,  
 You mainly were stirr'd up. *Strongly*

*King,* O! for two special reasons;  
 Which may to you, perhaps, seem much unsnew'd, <sup>to</sup>  
 But yet to me they are strong. The queen his mother  
 Lives almost by his looks, and for myself,—

on his way to England ; if your name be Horatio, as I am given to understand it is.

*Horatio* [*Reads*] "Horatio, when you have read this letter, let these fellows be admitted to the presence of the king ; they have letters for him. Before we had been two days out at sea, a pirate of great valour pursued us. Being overtaken, we gave a stiff fight, and during the fight I entered the pirate ship ; at once they put off to sea, and so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me mercifully, but they expect that I shall do them a good service in return. Let the king have the letters I have sent, and meet me as quickly as possible. I have some strange tale to tell you, and it will startle you ; yet words are too inadequate to convey the sense. These good fellows will bring you where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern sail on to England, of them I have a lot to tell you. Farewell. He whom you know yours, Hamlet."

Come, I shall get you presented to the king, finish your business with the King as quickly as you can so that you can take me to him from whom you brought these letters.

#### Scene VII. ANOTHER ROOM IN THE CASTLE

*Enter KING and LAERTES*

*King* Now certainly your conscience acquits me of all blames and you will cherish me as your friend,

(Page 180 Lines 8—31. Sc vii Lines 1—2)

since you have heard and perceived in your intelligence that he who has killed your father, aimed at my life.

*Laertes*. There is little doubt about that, but tell me how you did not take revenge upon him, when his crime was so serious, as you should have done, in my regard to your safety, wisdom, and other considerations.

*King*. For two special reasons. I could not take revenge, these reasons were to appear to be covered by the law. They weigh very much with me. The queen, my mother, is too fond of him, and as yet my ill-luck is too young to be

*Laertes*

My virtue or my plague, be it either which,  
 She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,  
 That, as the star moves not but in my sphere,  
 I could not but by her The other motive,  
 Why to a public court I might not go,  
 Is the great love the general gender bear him  
 Who, dropping all his faults in their affection,  
 Would, like the spring that turneth iron to stone,  
 Convert his griefs to graces, so that my arr'd arrow,  
 Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind,  
 Would have reverted to my bow again,  
 And not where I had aim'd them

*Laertes* And so have I a noble father lost,  
 A sister driven into desperate terms,  
 Whose worth, if praises may go back again,  
 Stood challenger on mount of all the age  
 For her perfections But my revenge will come.

*King.* Break not your sleep for that, you must not  
 think *Do not follow your self*

That we are made of stuff so flat and dull  
 That we can let our beard be shock with danger;  
 And think it pastime You shortly shall hear more;  
 I lov'd your father, and we love ourself,  
 And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine — 85

*Enter a Messenger.*

How now! what news?

*Messenger* Letters, my lord, from Hamlet:  
 This to your majesty, this to the queen

*King* From Hamlet! who brought them?

*Messenger* Sailors, my lord they say, I saw them not:  
 They were given me by Claudio, he receiv'd them 40  
 Of him that brought them.

*King* Laertes, you shall hear them  
 Leave us *[Exit Messenger.]*

*✓ High and mighty, you shall know I am set naked on  
 your kingdom To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your  
 kingly eyes, when I shall, first asking your pardon there-*

the curse, whatever it may be—she is closely bound up with me, that as the star moves in its orbit, so I cannot but move in the sphere of her love. The other reason why I could not bring him to public trial is the great popularity he enjoys with the multitude. They, forgetting all his faults in their affection, would, like the spring that turns wood to stone, convert his crimes into virtues, so any action I might have taken against such odds, would have recoiled upon my head.

*Laertes* And the result is that I have lost a noble father; I have a sister driven to madness, whose worth, if one might praise what she was, might challenge all ages to produce the like perfection. But I cannot withhold my revenge.

(Page 182. Lines 2—29)

*King.* You need not worry about your revenge, you should not think that we are so dull and tame in spirit that I shall let my authority be defied lightly, and connive. You shall soon hear. I loved your father, and I have a love for myself, and that, I hope, will teach you to imagine

*Enter A MESSENGER*

How now! What news?

*MESSENGER.* Letters my lord, from Hamlet, this to your majesty, this to the queen

*King.* From Hamlet! Who brought them?

*Messenger.* They say, my lord, sailors brought these letters. I did not see them. They were given me by Claudio; he received them from him who brought them.

*King* Laertes, you shall hear these letters. Withdraw

[*Exit* MESSENGER]

[*Reads*] "Your majesty, let me inform you that I have been set ashore in your dominion. I beg your permission to present myself before you to morrow, when I shall, with your

*unto, recount the occasions of my sudden and more strange return.*

"Hamlet."<sup>46</sup>

What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?  
Or is it some abuse and no such thing? *thick explor*

is it some abuse and no such thing? Laertes Know you the hand? Handwriting plan

King 'Tis Hamlet's character. 'Naked', 50

And in a postscript here, he says, 'alone.'

Can you advise me? *puzzle*

Laertes I'm lost in it, my lord But let him come!  
It warms the very sickness in my heart, ~~which~~ ~~hath~~ ~~in~~ ~~me~~ ~~born~~

That I shall live and tell him to his teeth, -

'Thus diddest thou.' You did like this, you

*King* If it be so, Laertes,  
As how should it be so? how otherwise?

Will you be rul'd by me? advised

*Laertes*                      Ay, my lord ;  
So you will not o'er rule me to a peace

King To thine own peace If he be now return'd, 60,

As checking at his voyage, and that he means

No more to undertake it, I will work him میتند

To an exploit, now ripe in my device, *making*

Under the which he shall not choose but fall;

And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe, 65

But even his mother shall uncharge the practice plot  
And call it accident

*Laertes.* My lord, I will be rul'd ;

The rather, if you could devise it so

That I might be the organ is very good

*King*                      *It falls right.*

You have been talk'd of since your travel much, 70

And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality

Wherein, they say, you shine, your sum of parts

Did not together pluck such envy from him

As did that one, and that, in my regard,

Of the new northwest siege. *Claro obtruso*  
Laertes What part is that, my lord? 75

leave, narrate the story of my sudden and still stranger return."

"Hamlet."

What could this mean? Have others come back too? Or is it a trick and is not what it appears to be?

*Laertes.* Do you know the handwriting.

*King* It is Hamlet's handwriting. He writes "naked," and adds in a postscript "alone." Can you throw any light on this?

*Laertes* I am puzzled, my lord. But let him come. It kindles my sick heart with hope

(Page 184. Lines 29—55)

that I shall live and charge him home with his dastardly crime.

*King* If it be true, Laertes—but I wonder how it should be or how otherwise—will you be advised by me?

*Laertes* Yes, my lord; provided you will not persuade me to be reconciled to him.

*King.* I shall give you such advice as will give full satisfaction to your revenge. If he has now returned, being interrupted in his voyage, I will egg him on to an enterprise, which is already planned out in my brain, in consequence of which he cannot but be destroyed. And for his death no blame can attach to us, even his mother will leave us free of the plot and set it down to accident.

*Laertes* My lord, I shall take your advice, preferably; if you could so manage that I could be the instrument of revenge.

*King.* It fits in. Since you have been much abroad, you have been talked of in Hamlet's hearing, for an accomplishment in which, they say, you excel. All your qualities put together did not excite so much envy in him as that single one, and that quality, in my opinion, being of the least importance.

*Laertes.* What accomplishment is that, my lord?



King A very riband in the cap of youth,  
 Yet needful too; for youth no less becomes  
 The light and careless livery that it wears *dress*  
 Than settled age his sables and his weeds, *sables*  
 Importing health and graveness. Two months since  
 Here was a gentleman of Normandy *Norman*  
 I've seen myself, and serv'd against the French,  
 And they can well on horseback; but this gallant  
 Had witchcraft in 't, he grew unto his seat.  
 And to such wondrous doing brought his horse,  
 As he had been incorpor'd and dem-natur'd *half*  
 With the brave beast, so far he topp'd my thought  
 That I, in forgery of shapes and tricks, *imagination*  
 Come short of what he did.

Laertes A Norman was 't?

King A Norman

90

Laertes. Upon my life, Lamord.

King The very same. *Gravel*

Laertes. I know him well; he is the brooch indeed  
 And gem of all the nation

King He made confession of you, *brooch*  
 And gave you such a masterly report  
 For art and exercise in your defence, *sword*  
 And for your rapier most especially,  
 That he cried out, 'twould be a right indeed  
 If one could match you, the scrimers of their nation.  
 He swore, had either motion, guard, nor eye, 103  
 If you oppos'd them Sir, this report of his  
 Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy  
 That he could nothing do but wish and beg  
 Your sudden coming o'er, to play with him.  
 Now, out of this, —

Laertes What out of this, my lord? 105

King Laertes, was your father dear to you?  
 Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,  
 A face without a heart? *Is artificial*

Laertes. Why ask you this?

*King.* A pretty trifle of an accomplishment that may grace a youngman, though it may be a needed one, for it is no less becoming of youth as a grace and ornament.

(Page 186. Lines 56—79)

than black garments are becoming of old age denoting attention to health and seriousness. Two months ago, here was a gentleman of Normandy—I have seen myself and served against the French, and they can show good feats in horsemanship; but this young fellow seemed to have marvellous mastery: he sat fixed on the back of the horse and performed such feats as if he had been a part of the horse or assimilated to its nature; he exceeded the utmost stretch of my imagination.

*Laertes.* You say it was a Norman?

*King.* A Norman.

*Laertes.* It must be Lamond.

*King.* That was the man.

*Laertes.* I know him well. He is the jewel and ornament of all the nation.

*King.* He spoke about you, and praised highly your skill in defence most specially in the use of the rapier, and wondered whether one could be your rival in this matter, which would be a sight to see. He swore that the fencers possessed no skill either in movement or defence or in thrust and would be easily beaten by you. Sir, this report about you filled Hamlet with such envy that he wished you were come back so that he might try a round with you. Now, out of this—

*Laertes.* What are you going to devise out of this, my lord?

(Page 185. Lines 80—106)

*King.* Laertes, did you love your father? Or are you a mere picture of sorrow, which is reflected in your face, but does not come from your heart?

*Laertes.* Why do you ask this?

King Not that I think you did not love your father,  
 But that I know love is begun by time, <sup>— fancy</sup> 110  
 And that I see, in passages of proof, <sup>by</sup>  
 Time qualifies the spark and fire of it —  
 These lives within the very flame of love  
 A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it  
 And nothing is at a like goodness still, 115  
 For goodness, growing to a plurisy, <sup>excess</sup>  
 Dies in his own too much That we would do,  
 We should do when ~~we~~ would, for this 'would' changes  
 And hath abatements and delays as many <sup>diminishes</sup>  
 And there are to <sup>persons</sup>gues, are hands, are accidents;  
 And then this 'should' is like a spendthrift sigh, <sup>action</sup>  
 That hurts by easing. But, to the quick o' the ulcer;  
 Hamlet comes back, what would you undertake  
 To show yourself your father's son in deed  
 More than in words?

Laertes To cut his throat i' the church.

King No place indeed should murder sanctuarize  
 Revenge should have no bounds But, good Laertes,  
 Will you do this, keep close within your chamber.  
 Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home;  
 We'll put on those shall praise your excellence,  
 And set a double varnish on the fame <sup>short</sup>  
 The Frenchman gave you, bring you, in fine, to  
 And wager on your heads: he, being remiss, <sup>or</sup>  
 Most generous and free from all contriving,  
 Will not peruse the foils; so that, with ease &  
 Or with a little shuffling, you may choose  
 His sword unabated, and, in a pass of practice <sup>w</sup>  
 Requite him for your father <sup>— treat</sup>

Laertes I will do 't;  
 And, for the purpose, I'll anoint my sword.  
 I bought an unction of a mountebank, <sup>— but</sup>  
 So mortal that, but dip a knife in it,  
 Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare, <sup>pl</sup>  
 Collected from all simples that have virtue

*King.* I do not think that you did not love your father, but love is a matter of time—and in circumstances which may test it, time seems to qualify its intensity ; there is something in this very intensity, which makes it impossible to be maintained in the same degree, for nothing can keep its uniform excellence, as it grows to its fulness, it will die out. If we have resolved to do anything, we must carry it out at once ; for this resolve changes, and is subject to slackening and delay according as its execution depends on our personal will and power as well as on accidents—and finally transforms itself into a lingering regret—and a sigh which is so wasteful of blood, though it seems to comfort us. But, now as to what seriously troubles us—Hamlet is coming back. What would you dare to prove yourself a worthy son of your father in action more than in word ?

*Laertes.* I would cut his throat in the church.

*King.* No place should indeed serve as a sanctuary for a murder. Revenge should not be circumscribed by limits. But, good Laertes keep yourself confined in your chamber. Hamlet, having returned, will learn that you are come home. We shall get some fellows to praise your skill in fencing and exaggerate the fame that the Frenchman ascribed to you, and to bring you together at last and lay bets on the chance of your engaging in a trial, he being careless,

(Page 188. Lines 107—134)

unsuspecting and innocent of any trick, will not carefully examine the rapiers ; so that without any difficulty or with a little of manoeuvre, you can choose a sharp-pointed rapier, and in a treacherous thrust pay him off for your father's murder !

*Laertes.* I will do it, and to effect my end successfully I will smear my sword with poison. I bought a drug of...

# HAMLET

Under the moon, can save the thing from death  
That is but scratch'd withal, I'll touch my point  
With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly, &c  
It may be death.

*King* Let's further think of this;  
Weigh what convenience both of time and means  
May fit us to our shape. If this should fail, ~~and~~  
And that our drift look through our bad performan  
'Twere better not assay'd, therefore this project  
Should have a back or second, that might hold. ~~us~~  
If this should blast in proof Soft! let me see; ~~o~~  
We'll make a solemn vager on your cunning's  
I ha't

When in your motion you are hot and dry,—  
As make your bouts more violent to that end,—  
And that he call for drink, I'll have prepar'd him  
A chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping, &c  
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,  
Our purpose may hold there But stay! what not

*Enter QUEEN*

How now, sweet queen! *Calamities*

*Queen* One woe doth tread upon another's he  
So fast they follow your sister's drown'd, Laerte  
*Laertes*. Drown'd! O, where? *Leaning back*

*Queen* There is a willow grows aslant a brook  
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream,  
There with fantastic garlands did she come,  
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples  
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name, *Cean*  
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call ther  
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds  
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke,  
When down her weedy trophies and herself *garlands*  
Fell in the weeping brook Her clothes spread w  
And, mermaid like, awhile they bore her up,  
Which time she chanted snatches of old lands, *A*  
As one incapable of her own distress,

quack doctor so deadly that a knife dipped in it, will kill by a mere scratch, and no plaster, however precious, prepared from all medicinal herbs, collected by moonlight, can save the person from death. I shall smear the point of my sword with this deadly drug, and if I can but scratch him with it, it will be sure death.

*King.* We shall think over the matter further. Let us consider what advantage time and means may offer to carry out the plan. If this does not produce the necessary effect, and our very motive is revealed in our bungling, we should better not try it. Therefore this plan should have a supplementary one that might succeed if the other fails in experiment. Wait, let me see. We shall bet heavily on your skill in fencing. Yes, here is the plan. When in the midst of your exercise you are warm and thirsty—make the exercise more vigorous for that purpose—and he calls for a drink, I shall have a cup ready for the occasion. If he but puts it to his lips,

(Page 190. Lines 135—160)

he dies if by chance he escapes your poisoned thrust.

ENTER *Queen*

What brings you, sweet queen ?

*Queen.* One misfortune follows upon another ! so fast are they coming, your sister is drowned, Laertes.

*Laertes* Drowned ! Oh, where ?

*Queen* There is a willow tree growing by the edge of a stream, and its silvery leaves are reflected in the transparent water. There she came garlanded with crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples to which vulgar shepherds give a coarser name, but which are called by our chaste maidens as dead men's fingers. As she climbed to hang her garlands on the hanging branches, one of these twigs broke when both she and her garlands fell into the stream that seemed to lament her fate. Her clothes spread wide, and they held her up like a mermaid for a while, at such a time she sang fragments of old unes as one who was not aware of her

Or like a creature native and indn'd  
 Unto that element, but long it could not be 180  
 Till that her garrients heavy with their drink,  
 Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay  
 To muddy death *is a tiny death*

*Laertes* Alas! then, she is drown'd?

*Queen* Drown'd drown'd

*Laertes* Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,  
 And therefore I forbid my tears; but yet 186  
 It is our trick, nature her custom holds, *human nature*  
 Let shame say what it will; when ~~life~~ *these* ~~gone~~ *ears disappear*  
 The woman will be out Adieu my Lord!

*Queen* I have a speech of fire that fain would blaze, . 100  
 But that this folly douts it *like* [Exit.

*King* *do does out* Let's follow, Gertrude  
 How much I had to do to calm his rage!  
 Now fear I this will give it start again;  
 Therefore let's follow, [Exeunt.

own danger, or like a creature, adapted to the water as its own element, but it could not go on long till her clothes, soaked in water, dragged her down to a watery grave, putting an end to her plaintive song

*Laertes.* Alas, then, she is drowned ?

*Queen.* Drowned, drowned.

*Laertes.* Poor Ophelia, you have too much of water, and, therefore, I spare my tears, yet it is part of our nature, and nature must have her way.

(Page 192. Lines 161—187)

I do not mind the shame of yielding to nature, when these tears which I cannot keep back, are ended, farewell, my lord I want to speak hot and fiery words, but they are quenched in tears.

*King.* Let us follow him, Gertrude. What a lot of trouble I had to turn away his wrath. Now I fear his rage will be kindled again. Therefore, let us follow him.

[*Exeunt*]



## ACT V

## Scene I A CHURCHYARD

*Enter two Clowns, with spades and mattock.*

*First Clown* Is she to be buried in Christian burial  
ha' wilfully seeks her own salvation? *Ancient*

*Second Clown.* I tell thee she is. and therefore make  
her grave straight the crowner hath sat on her, and  
finds it Christian burial *officer of the Crown who investigated*  
*of a case of abnormal death*

*First Clown* How can that be, unless she drowned  
herself in her own defence?

*Second Clown.* Why, 'tis found so 8

*First Clown* It must be se offendendo; it cannot be  
else. *defence* *willingly*

For here lies the point if I drown myself wittingly it  
argues an act, and an act hath three branches, it is, to  
act, to do, and to perform argal, she drowned herself  
wittingly. *therefore* *digge*

*Second Clown* Nay, but hear you, goodman delver,—

*First Clown* Give me leave Here lies the water,  
good here stands the man, good if the man go to 15  
this water, and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he,  
he goes,—mark you that, but if the water come to him,  
and drown him, he drowns not himself. argal, he  
that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his  
own life

*Second Clown* But is this law? 20

*First Clown* Ay, marry is't; crowner's quest law.

*Second Clown* Will you ha' the truth on't? If this  
had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried  
out o' Christian burial

*First Clown* Why, there thou say'st; and the 25  
more pity that great folk should have countenance  
in this world to drown or hang themselves, more  
than their even Christian Come, my spade There  
is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and  
grave makers, they hold up Adam's profession 30

*Second Clown* Was he a gentleman?

## ACT V

SCENE *Elsmore. A churchyard.**Enter two clowns. With spades, etc.*

*First Clown.* Is she who took away her own life to be buried according to Christian rites?

*Second Clown.* Yes, that is to be, therefore, waste no time in digging her grave; the coroner has held inquest on her, and certifies it as Christian burial

*Second Clown.* Why, that is the verdict.

*First Clown.* It must be justifiable homicide, it cannot be otherwise. For this is the point, if I drown myself knowingly, it implies an act, and an act has three factors—it is to cut, to do, to perform; therefore she drowned herself knowingly.

*Second Clown.* Yet, hear, good digger—

*First Clown.* Give me permission. Here lies the water; good, here stands the man; good. If the man goes to this water and drowns himself in it, it is the indisputable fact that he goes—do you note that, but if the water comes to him and drowns him,

(Page 194. Lines 188—194. Act V. Sc. I. Lines 1—17)

He does not drown himself, therefore, he who is not guilty of his own death, does not cut short his own life.

*Second Clown.* But is this the law?

*First Clown.* Yes, that is the law, it is the law of the coroner concerning the inquest.

*Second Clown.* Will you have the truth of the whole matter? If she had not been a woman of gentle birth, she would have been buried in unconsecrated grounds.

*First Clown.* Why, there you are. It is the greater pity that great people should have encouragement in this world to drown or hang themselves more than their fellow Christians. Well, let me make use of my spade. There were no ancient gentleman in the old days but gardeners, ditchers and grave-diggers; they follow Adam's profession.

*Second Clown.* Was he a gentleman?

*First Clown.* A' was the first that ever bore arms.

*Second Clown.* Why, he had none

*First Clown.* What' art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? <sup>(new)</sup> The Scripture says, Adam digged, could he dig without arms? I'll put another question to thee, if thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself— 38

*Second Clown.* Go to. *Come on*

*First Clown.* What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

*Second Clown.* The gallows maker, for that frame outlives a thousand tenants <sup>occupant</sup> 43

*First Clown.* I like thy wit well, in good faith, the gallows does well, but how does it well? it does well to those that do ill, now thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church' argal, the gallows may do well to thee To 't again; come.

*Second Clown.* Who builds stronger than a mason a shipwright, or a carpenter? 50

*First Clown.* Ay, tell me that and unyoke. <sup>o' us</sup>

*Second Clown.* Marry, now I can tell

*First Clown.* To 't

*Second Clown.* Mass, I cannot tell, 54

*Enter HAMLET and HORATIO at a distance.*

*First Clown.* Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating, and, when you are asked this question next, say, 'a grave maker' the houses that he makes last till doomsday Go, get thee to Yaughan; fetch me a stoup of liquor,

*[Exit Second Clown]*

*First Clown digs, and sings*

In youth when I did love, did love, 60

Methought it was very sweet,

To contract o' the time for a my bebove,

O! methought there was nothing meet.

*Hamlet.* Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave making? 66

*First Clown.* He was the first who carried arms.

*Second Clown.* Why, he had none

*First Clown.* Are you a pagan? I wonder at your ignorance of Scripture? The Scripture says, Adam dug, could he dig without arms? Let me put another question to you, if you cannot answer to the point, you may go and be hanged.

*Second Clown.* Come on.

*First Clown.* What kind of creature is he who builds stronger than the mason, the shipwright or the carpenter?

*Second Clown.* The gallows-maker, for the post he sets up outlasts a thousand victims.

*First Clown.* I admire your wit, truly the gallows is a good example. It serves well, it serves well to those who do ill. Now you do ill to say that the gallows is built stronger than the church, therefore, the gallows may do well to you. Try it again, come.

(Page 196. Lines 18—48)

*Second Clown.* "Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or carpenter?"

*First Clown.* Yes, tell me that and have done with it,

*Second Clown.* Surely, now I can tell

*First Clown.* Go on,

*Second Clown.* Surely, I cannot tell.

*Enter Hamlet and Horatio, at some distance.*

*First Clown.* Rack your brains no more about it, for your brains will not improve, however taxed; and when you are asked this question next, say "a grave-digger." The houses that he makes last till the judgment day. Go to Yaughan; and bring me a cup of wine.

[Exit *Second Clown*.

[He digs, and sings.

In youth when I did love, it seemed to me that it was very sweet, and then to enter into wedlock for myself—Oh! the time, it could not have been proper

*Hamlet.* Is this fellow callous because he sings while he digs a grave?

*Horatio* Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness

*Hamlet.* 'Tis e'en so; the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense. *He throws up a skull*

*First Clown*

But age, with his stealing steps, 70  
Hath claw'd me in his clutch,  
And hath shipped me intil the land,  
As if I had never been such.

*[Throws up a skull]*

*Hamlet.* That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once; how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder! This might be the pate of a politician, which this ass now o'er-reaches, one that would circumvent God, might it not? *He throws up a skull*

*Horatio* It might, my lord.

*Hamlet* Or of a courtier, which could say, 'Good morrow, sweet lord! How dost thou, good lord? This might be my Lord Such-a-one, that praised my Lord Such-a-one's horse, when he meant to beg it, might it not?

*Horatio.* Ay, my lord. 84

*Hamlet.* Why, e'en so, and now my Lady Worm's; chapless, and knocked about the mazzard with a sexton's spade. Here's fine revolution, an we had the trick to see't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at loggats with 'em? mine ache to think on't

*First Clown*

A pick-axe and a spade, a spade. 90  
For and a surrounding sheet;  
O! a pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet

*[Throws up another skull]*

*Hamlet* There's another, why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his 95 quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his

*Horatio* Habit has made it a matter of course with him  
*Hamlet.* It is even so, the hand which does no work, has  
 the more sensitive feeling.

*First Clown.* [Sings]

But old age, creeping in stealthily, has caught me in its  
 grip, and transported me into the land of the dead.

[Throws up a skull.

(Page 198. Lines 49—73)

*Hamlet.* That skull had once a tongue, and could sing;  
 how the fellow knocks it about on the ground as if it were  
 the jaw bone of the ass with which Cain did the first murder.  
 It might be the head of a plotter whom this fellow now treats  
 with contempt—the plotter who would get round God if he  
 could.

*Horatio.* That is true, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Or it might be the brain of a courtier, who  
 would say, ‘Good morrow, sweet lord! How do you do,  
 good lord?’ It might be my lord such-a-one, who praised  
 another lord’s horse, when he meant to beg it. Might it not  
 be the matter?

*Horatio* Yes, my lord.

*Hamlet* Why, it might be so; and now it is the property  
 of my Lady Worm, it is jawless, and is knocked about by  
 grave digger’s spade. Here is a nice change, if we could but  
 trace it. How could they play with these bones as if while  
 these fellows were alive, their up bringing cost no trouble  
 and expense.

*First Clown* A pickaxe, and a spade, and also a shroud.  
 It is proper that a pit of clay is to be made for such a guest.

[Throws up another skull.

*Hamlet.* There is another skull, it might be the skull of  
 a lawyer, Where are now his legal subtleties and quibbles,  
 his cases, his tenures and his tricks? Why does he permit  
 this rude fellow to knock his head about with a dirty shovel,  
 and will not charge him with assault? Well, this fellow  
 might have been in his time a great buyer of land

(Page 200. Lines 74—99)

action of battery? Hum! This fellow might be in 's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries; is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of 105<sup>o</sup> indentures? The very conveyance of his lands will hardly lie in this box, and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha?

*Horatio.* Not a jot more, my lord

*Hamlet.* Is not parchment made of sheep skins? 110

*Horatio.* Ay, my lord, and of calf skins too

*Hamlet.* They are sheep and calves which seek out assurance in that I will speak to this fellow. Whose grave's this, sir?

*First Clown.* Mine, sir, 115

O! a pit of clay for to be made

For such a guest is meet *prop*

*Hamlet.* I think it be thine, indeed, for thou liest in 't.

*First Clown.* You lie out on 't, sir, and therefore it is not yours, for my part, I do not lie in 't, and yet it is mine. 120

*Hamlet.* Thou dost lie in 't, to be in 't and say it is thine: 'tis for the dead, not for the quick, therefore thou liest

*First Clown.* 'Tis a quick lie, sir, 'twill away again, from me to you

*Hamlet.* What man dost thou dig it for? 125

*First Clown.* For no man, sir

*Hamlet.* What woman, then?

*First Clown.* For none, neither.

*Hamlet.* Who is to be buried in 't?

*First Clown.* One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she's dead. *rec 40* 131

*Hamlet.* How absolute the knave is! we must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord,

with his bonds, with legal documents in favour of a debt, with the fees paid to him by his tenant for permission to transfer his lands to another, with his double *vouchers* (witnesses), called upon to confirm the tenant's title to the land. He has now come to this end—a sorry end of all his business shrewdness, his head being now full of dust. His witness will no more swear to his title to his land, and his contracts in duplicate are now no more than worth than the scrap of paper on which they are written. His legal documents, in favour of transfer of lands will hardly be contained in his coffin. Is this the end of the inheritor of lands?

*Horatio.* There is nothing but this, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Is not parchment made of sheep skins?

*Horatio.* Yes, my lord, and of calf-skins too.

*Hamlet.* They are no better than sheep and calves who rely on these documents. I will speak to this fellow. Whose grave is this, my dear fellow?

*First Clown.* Mine, sir. [*Sings, Oh, it is proper that a pit of clay should be made for such a guest.*]

*Hamlet.* I think it is yours, for you lie (*tell a lie*) in this (in this matter)

*First Clown.* You lie outside it, and therefore it is not yours. As for myself, I do not lie in it and yet it is mine.

*Hamlet.* In the matter of living in it, you lie, when you say it is yours, it is for the dead, not for the living: therefore you lie

*First Clown.* It is a living lie, sir; therefore, it will pass from me to you again.

*Hamlet.* For what man are you digging it?

*First Clown.* For no man, sir

(Page 200. Lines 100—125)

*Hamlet.* What woman, then?

*First Clown.* For none, either

*Hamlet.* Who is to be buried in it?

*First Clown.* One who was a woman, sir; but God give her soul peace, for she is dead.

*Hamlet.* How precise the fellow is! We must speak to the point, or quibbling will defeat us. By God, *Horatio*, for



Horatio, these three years I have taken note of it; the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe. How long hast thou been a grave-maker? 135

*First Clown* Of all the days i' the year, I came to 't that day that our last King Hamlet overcome Fortinbras 140

*Hamlet* How long is that since? 140

*First Clown* Cannot you tell that? every tool can tell that; it was the very day that young Hamlet was born; he that is mad, and sent into England.

*Hamlet* Ay, marry, why was he sent into England? 144

*First Clown*. Why, because he was mad he shall recover his wits there, or, if he do not, 'tis no great matter there

*Hamlet* Why?

*First Clown* 'Twill not be seen in him there; there, men are as mad as he

*Hamlet* How came he mad? 150

*First Clown* Very strangely, they say

*Hamlet* How strangely?

*First Clown* Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

*Hamlet* Upon what ground?

*First Clown* Why, here in Denmark; I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years 156

*Hamlet* How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot? 157

*First Clown* Faith, if he be not rotten before he die,—as we have many pocky corpses now-a-days, that will scarce hold the laying in,—he will last you some eight year or nine year, a tanner will last you nine year. 161

*Hamlet* Why he more than another?

*First Clown* Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade that he will keep out water a great while, and your water is a sore decayer of your whorson dead body. Here's a skull now, this skull hath lain in the earth three-and twenty years 167

the three years I have noted this : All people have grown so cultivated in expression that you cannot see any difference between courtier and peasant—the peasant seems to run the courtier too close How long have you been a grave digger

*First Clown.* Since the day our last king Hamlet defeated Fortinbras, I have been at it.

*Hamlet.* How long is it since ?

*First Clown.* Cannot you tell that ? Every fool can tell it. It was the very day, that young Hamlet was born—he who is is mad and has been sent to England,

*Hamlet.* May I ask why he was sent to England ?

*First Clown.* Why, because he was mad. He will recover his sanity there, or if he does not, it will not make any difference.

*Hamlet.* Why ?

*First Clown.* His madness will not be perceived there, because the people there are as mad as he.

*Hamlet.* How did he become mad ?

*First Clown.* In a very strange manner, they say.

*Hamlet.* How in a strange manner ?

*First Clown.* By losing his wits

*Hamlet.* On what ground ?

*First Clown.* Why, here in Denmark I have been a grave digger here from my boyhood upward—for thirty years.

*Hamlet.* How long will a man lie in the earth before he rots ?

(Page 202. Lines 126—157)

*First Clown.* If he is not already rotten before he dies—as we have many corpses these days that fall to pieces when being laid in the grave—he may last eight or nine years ; a tanner may last nine years

*Hamlet.* Why he more than any other ?

*First Clown.* Because his skin has been so seasoned by the occupation he follows that he will long resist the action of water, the water causes the greatest decay to the dead body. Here is a skull ; it has lain in the earth for twenty-three years.

*Hamlet.* Whose was it?

*First Clown.* A whoreson mad fellow's it was · whose  
do you think it was? 170

*Hamlet.* Nay, I know not.

*First Clown.* A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! a' poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was, sir, Yorick's skull the king's jester.

*Hamlet.* This! 175

*First Clown.* E'en that

*Hamlet.* Let me see — [*Takes the skull.*] — Alas! poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy, he hath borne me on his back a thousand times, and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap- 180 fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come, make her laugh at that. Prithce, Horatio, tell me one thing

*Horatio.* What's that, my lord? 190

*Hamlet.* Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth?

*Horatio.* E'en so

*Hamlet.* And smelt so? pah! [*Puts down the skull.*]

*Horatio.* E'en so, my lord. 185

*Hamlet.* To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole? *curiously*

*Horatio.* 'Twere to consider too *curiously* to consider so.

*Hamlet.* No, faith, not a jot, but to follow him 200 thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it, as thus Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make

*Hamlet.* Whose was it ?

*First Clown.* It was a mad fellow's skull Whose do you think it was ?

*Hamlet.* I do not know.

*First Clown.* He was a mad rogue, and let him be cursed for it He poured a cup of Rhenish on my head once. That skull was, sir, that of Yorick, the king's jester.

*Hamlet.* This ?

*First Clown.* Even that.

*Hamlet.* Let me see. [*Takes the skull*] Alas, poor Yorick ! I knew him, Horatio. He was a fellow of inexhaustible mirth and finest fancy, he has carried me on his back many times, and now how loathsome it is It sickens me Here hung those lips I have kissed how often I know not Where are your jests now ? Your sports ? Your songs ? Your outbursts of mirth which would make all hearers laugh ? You have not a single jest now to ridicule your grinning skull ? Quite crest-fallen ? Now go to my lady's chamber, and tell her, however she may paint her face thick, she will ultimately be reduced to this grinning skull, let her be amused by it. I pray you, Horatio, tell me one thing.

*Horatio.* What is it, my lord ?

(Page 204. Lines 158—190)

*Hamlet.* Do you think that Alexander had the same look as this skull after his death ?

*Horatio.* Even so.

*Hamlet.* Did he smell so ? [*Puts down the skull.*]

*Horatio.* Even so, my lord.

*Hamlet.* To what ignoble state we may return after death Horatio ! May not our imagination investigate the changes that Alexander had undergone after his death and at last find his dust stopping a bung hole ?

*Horatio.* To look at the matter in this way is to think too fancifully.

*Hamlet.* Not at all, we can moderately pursue the changes of decay, and it is likely that we find the dust of Alexander in such service ; as thus : Alexander died, Alexander was

-----, and why of that loam, whereto he was converted,  
might they not stop a beer-barrel? 205

Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,  
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away  
O! that that earth, which kept the world in awe,  
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw.  
But soft! but soft! aside: here comes the king 210

*Enter KING QUEEN, LAERTES, and a coffin with Lords  
attendant and Priest*

The queen, the courtiers. who is that they follow?  
And with such maimed rites? This doth doth betoken  
The corse they follow did with desperate hand  
Fordo its own life, 'twas of some estate 214  
Couch we awhile, and mark [*Retiring with HORATIO*  
*Laertes.* What ceremony else?

*Hamlet.* That is Laertes,

A very noble youth. mark.

*Laertes* What ceremony else?

*First Priest* Her obsequies have been as far enlarg'd  
As we have warrantise her death was doubtful, 220  
And, but that great command o'ersways the order,  
She should in ground unsanctified have lodg'd  
Till the last trumpet, for charitable prayers,  
Shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her;  
Yet here she is allow'd her virgin crants, 225  
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home  
Of bell and burial

*Laertes* Must there no more be done?

*First Priest.* No more be done.

We should profane the service of the dead,  
To sing sage requiem, and such rest to her 230  
As to peace parted souls

*Laertes.* Lay her i' th'earth;

And from her fair and unpolluted flesh  
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,  
A ministering angel shall my sister be,  
When thou liest howling.

buried, Alexander returns to dust, the dust is earth, of earth is made rich soil, now with this loam (rich soil) to which Alexander was changed, the hole in a beer-barrel might be stopped. Majestic Caesar dead and turned to dust, might fill a hole to keep out the wind, what a pity that earthly shape which ruled the world, should stop a hole in a wall to keep the cold wind of winter. Let us step aside, here comes the king.

*Enter* PRIESTS, *etc*, *in procession*, *the corpse of* OPHELIA,  
LAERTES and MOURNERS *following*, KING, QUEEN,  
*their trains, etc.*

The queen, the courtiers, whom are they following? And with such curtailed ceremony? It shows that it is a case of suicide. It must be a person of noble state. Let us hide ourselves and watch the scene. [*Retiring with Horatio.*]

*Laertes* Is there to be any other ceremony?

(Page 205. Lines 192—216)

*Hamlet.* That is Laertes, a very noble young man: observe him

*Laertes.* Is there to be any more ceremony?

*First Priest* The funeral rites have been as liberally observed as we have authority. There was doubt about the manner of her death, and she should have been buried in unholy ground but for the authority of the king over-ruling the custom. Instead of prayers made for the repose of her soul, pieces of broken pottery, stones and pebbles would have been thrown on her grave. Yet she is allowed her virgin garlands, the strewing of flowers and the right of being laid to rest with the passing bell and in consecrated ground.

*Laertes* Nothing else will be done?

*First Priest.* No more ceremony. We should be doing dishonour to the burial service if we were to sing solemn as due to souls departed in peace.

*Laertes* Lay her in the earth, and may violets spring from her fair and uncorrupted flesh; I tell you, rude priest, my sister will come an angel to comfort you when you howl in torments in hell.

Hamlet                      What! the fair Ophelia?      235  
Queen    Sweets to the sweet, farewell!

*[Scattering flowers]*

I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife?  
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,  
And not have strew'd thy grave

Laertes                      O! treble woe

Fall ten times treble on that cursed head  
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense  
Depriv'd thee of    Hold off the earth awhile,  
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms

*[Leaps into the grave.]*

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,  
Till of this flat a mountain you have made,      245  
To o'ertop old Pelion or the skyish head  
Of blue Olympus

Hamlet *[Advancing.]* What is he whose grief  
Bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of sorrow  
Conjures the wandering stars, and make them stand  
Like wonder wounded hearers? this is I,      250  
Hamlet the Dane

*[Leaps into the grave.]*

Laertes                      The devil take thy soul!

*[Grapples with him.]*

Hamlet.    Thou pray'st not well.  
I prithee, take thy fangers from my throat;  
For though I am not splenetic and rash  
Yet have I in me something dangerous,      255  
Which let thy wisdom fear    Away thy hand!

King    Pluck them asunder

Queen.                                      Hamlet! Hamlet!

All    Gentlemen,—

Horatio                      Good my lord, be quiet.

*[The Attendants part them, and they come out of the grave.]*

Hamlet    Why, I will fight with him upon this theme  
Until my eyelids will no longer wag      260

Queen.    O my son! what theme?

*Hamlet.* What, the fair Ophelia !

*Queen* Let the sweet flowers be showered on the sweet Ophelia ; farewell ! [*Scattering flowers*] I hoped that you would have been my Hamlet's wife, I expected to have adorned your bridal-bed, sweet maiden, and not to have strewn flowers on your grave.

(Page 208. Lines 217—239)

*Laertes.* May anguish and torment, three times, nay ten times thrice pursue him whose violent deed drove you to madness ! For a while stop throwing the earth into the grave, till I have held her in my arms. [*Leaps into the grave*

Now throw the earth upon the living and dead till you have raised a mountain over this plain country, which would be higher than Pelion or the blue summit of Olympus, which seems to touch the sky.

*Hamlet* [*Advancing*] Who is he whose grief speaks so emphatically, whose accents of sorrow seem to enchant the stars so that they pause and hear, stricken with wonder ? This is I, Hamlet the Dane. [*Leaps into the grave.*

*Laertes.* May the devil seize your soul !

[*Grappling with him.*

*Hamlet.* You pray wrongly. I pray you, remove your fingers from my throat ; for though I am not spiteful and rash yet there is in me something dangerous which you should beware in your own interest. Withhold your hand !

*King.* Separate them.

*Queen* Hamlet, Hamlet !

*All* Gentlemen—

*Horatio* My good lord, be quiet. [*The attendants part them, and they come out of the grave.*

*Hamlet* Why, I will fight with him on this very topic until my eyelids stop moving.

*Queen.* O my son, what topic ?



*Hamlet* I lov'd Ophelia forty thousand brothers  
 Could not, with all their quantity of love,  
 Make up my sum What wilt thou do for her?

*King* O' he is mad, Laertes 265

*Queen* For love of God, forbear him.

*Hamlet* 'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do:

Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself?

Woo't drink up aisel? eat a crocodile?

I'll do't Dost thou come here to whine? *wimper* 270

To outface me with leaping in her grave?

Be buried quick with her, and so will I

And, if thou prate of mountains, let them throw

Millions of acres on us, till our ground,

Singeing his pate against the burning zone, 275

Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou'lt mouth,

I'll rant as well as thou.

*Queen* This is mere madness.

And thus a while the fit will work on him;

Anon as patient as the female dove,

When that her golden complets are disclos'd, 280

His silence will sit drooping

*Hamlet*

Hear you, sir;

What is the reason that you use me thus? *heart*

I lov'd you ever but it is no matter,

Let Hercules himself do what he may,

The cat will mew and dog will have his day. [Exit. 285

*King* I pray you, good Horatio, wait upon him

[Exit HORATIO

[To LAERTES] *be late cut* Strengthen your patience in our last night's  
 speech;

We'll put the matter to the present push.

Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.

This grave shall have a living monument 290

An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;

Till then, in patience our proceeding be.

[Exeunt.]

*Hamlet.* I loved Ophelia ; forty thousand brothers

(Page 210. Lines 239—262)

could not, with all their heaping measure of love, reach mine.  
What will you do for her ?

*King* Oh, he is mad, Laertes.

*Queen.* For love of God, let him alone.

*Hamlet.* By God, let me know what you will do Would you weep ? Would you fight ? Would you fast ? Would you tear yourself to pieces ? Would you drink vinegar or eat a crocodile ? I will do the same. Do you come here to whimper ? To challenge me by leaping into the grave ? Would you be buried alive with her ? And so will I And if you talk of mountains, let them heap millions of acres on us till the heaped earth, striking against the meridian, makes Ossa look like a wart. Nay, if you will bluster, I will be game for it.

*Queen.* This is absolute madness, and thus for a while he will rave on. Soon, as patient as the mother dove, when her chicks are hatched, he will maintain a moody silence.

*Hamlet.* Hear me, Sir What is the reason that you treat me thus ? I ever loved you ; but it does not matter. Let Laertes bluster. I shall show it in action when my turn comes. [ *Exit.*

*King.* I pray you, good Horatio, attend on him

*Exit* HORATIO

[ *To Laertes* ] Hold yourself in patience, depending on the plan we made last night We shall immediately bring it about. Good Gertrude get some people to keep watch over your son. This grave shall have a life-like monument.

(Page 210. Lines 263—290)

We shall soon have a time of peace ; till then let us proceed in patience.

## Scene II. A HALL IN THE CASTLE

*Enter HAMLET and HORATIO*

*Hamlet* So much for this, sir. now shall you see the  
other; <sup>detail</sup>

You do remember all the circumstance?

*Horatio*. Remember it, my lord?

*Hamlet* Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting  
That would not let me sleep, methought I lay  
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes Rashly  
And prais'd be rashness for it, let us know,  
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well  
When our deep plots do pall, and that should teach us  
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will 10

*Horatio*. That is most certain

*Hamlet* Up from my cabin,  
My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in the dark  
Groped I to find out them, had my desire, &  
Finger'd their packet, and in fine withdrew  
To mine own room again, making to bold—  
My fears forgetting manners—to unseal *Prober*  
Their grand commission, where I found, *Horatio*  
O royal knavery! an exact command,  
Larded with many several sorts of reasons 20  
Importing Denmark's health, and England's too,  
With, ho! such bugs and goblins in my life,  
That, on the supervise, no leisure bated, *first reading*  
No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,  
My head should be struck off.

*Horatio*. Is't possible? 25

*Hamlet* Here's the commission. read it at more leisure.  
But wilt thou here me how I did proceed?

*Horatio* I beseech you *enlarge*

*Hamlet* Being thus be netted round with villanies,—  
Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,  
They had begun the play,—I sat me down,  
Devis'd a new commission, wrote it fair; 30

## Scene II. A HALL IN THE CASTLE

*Enter HAMLET and HORATIO*

*Hamlet.* Let me tell you now the rest of my adventures. You remember all the details?

*Horatio.* I do, my lord.

*Hamlet.* Sir, a rebellious spirit woke in me, and would not let me sleep. It seemed to me that I was in a worse plight than mutineers in fetters. Rashly—thanks to rashness, be it known that rashness may help us best when well-laid plans miscarry—and this should teach us that there is a divine power which directs our purposes, however we may labour at them.

*Horatio.* That is very true.

*Hamlet.* I got up from my cabin, put on the sailor's gown and groped my way in the dark to find them. And my object was gained—I got hold of their packet, and with it returned to my cabin, and acting under fear of my personal safety which cast out all propriety, I unsealed the packet, and to my horror I found, Horatio—what a villain the king could have been—a peremptory command, graced with the variety of reasons, bearing upon the safety of Denmark and England, implying that I am a great source of danger if I am allowed to live.

(Page 212. Lines 291—292. Sc. II. Lines 1—23).

So that on reading the letter, no time being allowed, not even the time to grind the axe, my head should be struck off.

*Horatio.* Is that possible?

*Hamlet.* Here is the commission; read it when you have more time. But will you hear me how I proceeded?

*Horatio.* I pray you.

*Hamlet.* Being thus pressed hard by knavery—before I could summon my faculties and propose to myself what should be done, a complete plan of action had formed itself in my brain. I set down, and drew up a new commission, and

I once did hold it, as our statists do,  
 A baseness to write fair, and labour'd much  
 How to forget that learning; but, sir, now  
 It did me yeoman's service, Wilt thou know  
 The effect of what I wrote? *perfect*

*Horatio.*

Ay, good my lord.

*Hamlet* An earnest conjuration from the king  
 As England was his faithful tributary,  
 As love between them like the palm should flourish  
 As peace should still her wheaten garland wear,  
 And stand a comme 'tween their amities, *link*  
 And many such-like 'As'es of great charge, *utter*  
 That, on the view and knowing of these contents  
 Without debatement further, more or less, *thinking*  
 He should the bearers put to sudden death,  
 Not shriving-time allow'd *To Confess before the P.*

*Horatio*

How was this seal'd?

*Hamlet* Why, even in that was heaven ordinan  
 I had my father's signet in my purse,  
 Which was the model of that Danish seal;  
 Folded the writ up in form of the other,  
 Subscrib'd it, gave it th' impression, plac'd it safe  
 The changing never known Now, the next day  
 Was our sea-fight, and what to this was sequent  
 Thou know'st already.

*Horatio.* So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to

*Hamlet* Why, man, they did make love to th  
 ployment;

They are not near my conscience; their defeat *also*  
 Does by their own insinuation grow. *melting*  
 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes  
 Between the pass and fell-incensed points *deadly*  
 Of mighty opposites

*Horatio.*

Why, what a king is this!

*Hamlet* Does it not, thinks't thee, stand me no  
 He that hath kill'd my king and whor'd my mothe  
 Popp'd in between the election and my hopas,

wrote it in a fair hand ; I once regarded it, as our statesmen do, a sign of low birth to write a fair hand, and took much pains to forget it, but, sir, now it came very handy to me. Will you know what I re-wrote ?

*Horatio.* Yes, my good lord.

*Hamlet.* An earnest request from the king, as England was his faithful vassal country, as friendship between the two countries might grow like a palm, as peace should promote prosperity, between the two countries, and link them in friendship, and many such solemn charges—that on the perusal of the contents of the letter, without any pause, he should put the bearers to sudden death, not even allowing them time to confess their sins.

*Horatio.* How was this sealed ?

*Hamlet.* Why, even in this matter heaven ordained events in my favour ; I had my father's signet ring in my purse.

(Page 212. Lines 24—49)

Which was an exact copy of the Danish seal ; I folded the letter exactly like the other, put the signature to it, sealed it and deposited it safely, the substitute never being suspected. Next day the sea fight took place, and you know already what followed this.

*Horatio.* So Rosencrantz and Guildenstern go to their doom.

*Hamlet.* Why, man, they took to this business very readily. My conscience is not sore for them at all. Their destruction is caused by their own meddlesomeness. It is dangerous for mean fellows to come in between mighty enemies, and meddle in their affairs.

*Horatio* I wonder what a wicked king he must be, <sup>in Denmark or Sept</sup>

*Hamlet* Do you not think that it behoves me to strike him down with this arm—the fellow who has killed my king, dishonoured my mother, kept me out of the throne, attempted my very life and with such trickery ? Do you not think that

Gate

Thrown out his angle for my proper life,  
 And with such cozenage—it 't not perfect conscience  
 To quit him with this arm? and is 't not to be damn'd  
 To let this canker of our nature come ~~harm~~  
 In further evil? 70

*Horatio* It must be shortly known to him from Eng-  
 land

What is the issue of the business there. *inter vi*

*Hamlet* It will be short the interim is mine  
 And a man's life's no more than to say 'One.' *then*

But I am very sorry, good *Horatio*,

That to *Laertes* I forgot myself;

For, by the image of my cause, I see

The portraiture of his I'll court his favours:

But, sure, the bravery of his grief did put me

Into a towering passion. *letting it pass*

*Horatio* 'Peace! who comes here? 80

*Enter Osrlic*

*Osrlic* Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

*Hamlet*. I humbly thank you, sir. [*Aside to HORATIO*]  
 Dost know this water fly?

*Horatio* [*Aside to HAMLET*] No, my good lord 81

*Hamlet*. [*Aside to HORATIO*] Thy state is the more gra-  
 cious; for 'tis a vice to know him. He hath much land,  
 and fertile; let a beast be lord of beasts, and his crib shall  
 stand at the king's mess: 'tis a chough; but, as I say,  
 spacious in the possession of dirt *Jackdaw (Chattering)*

*Osrlic* Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I  
 should impart a thing to you from his majesty *causes* 81

*Ham* I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit  
 Put your bonnet to his right use; 'tis for the head

*Osrlic* I thank your lordship, 'tis very hot.

*Hamlet* No, believe me, 'tis very cold, the wind is  
 northerly. *fairly*

*Osrlic*. It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed. 82

*Hamlet* But yet methinks 't is very sultry and hot  
 for my complexion

I can despatch him with a free conscience? Shall I not be cursed if I permit this pest of society to exist and do further mischief?

*Horatio.* He will soon learn from the king of England the result of the mission.

*Hamlet.* There is but a short interval, and I must make use of it

(Page 214 Lines 57—73)

and man's life can end as soon as one can count one. I am very sorry, Horatio, that I have behaved so badly with Laertes; I can judge his wrong in terms of my own, I will seek his favour. But surely the ostentation of his grief excited me beyond measure,

*Horatio.* Silence!—Who comes here?

*Enter OSRIC*

*Osric.* Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

*Hamlet.* I thank you humbly, sir. [*Aside to Horatio*] Do you know this gentleman?

*Horatio.* [*Aside to Hamlet*] No, my good lord.

*Hamlet* [*Aside to Horatio*] You are in favour with God, for it is a vice to know him. He is owner of much fertile land. Let a beast possess so many head of cattle (or landed estate), and he will have place at the royal table. It is a jackdaw (a chatterer), but, as I say, he possesses much land.

*Osric.* Sweet lord, if your lordship had time, I should communicate a message to you from his majesty.

*Hamlet.* I will receive it, sir, with all earnestness of spirit. You need not hold your cap in your hand, it is meant for the head.

*Osric.* I thank your lordship, it is very hot

*Hamlet.* No, let me assure it is very cold! the wind blows from the north.

*Osric.* It is fairly cold, my lord, indeed.

*Hamlet.* Yet it seems to me it is very stuffy and hot, or my complexion—



*Osric* Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry, as 'twere, I cannot tell how. But, my lord, his majesty bade me signify to you that he has laid a great wager on your head. Sir, this is the matter,— 102

*Hamlet* I beseech you, remember—

[HAMLET moves him to put on his hat]

*Osric* Nay, good my lord, for mine ease, in good faith Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes, be- 105  
lieve me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excel-  
lent differences, of very soft society and great showing;  
indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or  
calendar of gentry, for you shall find in him the  
continent of what part a gentleman would see *quaintly*

*Hamlet* Sir, his definement suffers no perdition *lies*  
in you, though, I know to divide him inventorially *separately*  
would dizzy the arithmetic of memory, and yet but-  
yaw neither, in respect of his quick sail. But, in the  
verity of extolment, I take him to be a sole of great life  
article, and his infusion of such dearth and rareness,  
as, to make true diction of him, his semblable is his  
mirror; and who else would trace him, his umbrage, *else*  
nothing more *description truly*

*Osric* Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him 12

*Hamlet* The concernancy, sir? why do we wrap  
the gentleman in our more rawer breath? *Unskilled*

*Osric* Sir?

*Horatio* Is 't not possible to understand in an-  
other tongue? You will do 't, sir, really 125

*Hamlet* What imports the nomination of this  
gentleman?

*Osric* Of Laertes?

*Horatio* His purse is empty already; all's golden  
words are spent 130

*Hamlet* Of him, sir

*Osric* I know you are not ignorant—

*Hamlet* I would you did, *known* sir, in faith, if you did  
it would not much approve me. Well, sir 134

*Osric* Exceedingly hot, my lord ; it is, I do not know how. But, my lord, his majesty has commanded me to inform you that he has laid a bet on your skill in fencing ; sir, this is the matter—

(Page 216 Lines 74—101)

*Hamlet.* I pray you, remember—

*Hamlet moves him to put on his hat.*

*Osric* Indeed, for my own comfort, I prefer to remain uncovered. Sir, lately Laertes has arrived at the court believe me, he is a perfect gentleman, full of most marked qualities and great abilities ; indeed, to speak of him with real feeling, he is the very model of a gentleman, for you shall find him containing and comprising every quality which a gentleman would desire to contemplate for imitation

*Hamlet.* Sir, the definition of his qualities is fully up to the mark, though I know that to enumerate them separately would be an arithmetical feat that would stagger the memory ; and still if the attempt is to be made, it would fumble along, and never come up with his accomplishments But to take the true measure of him I consider him a man of great worth, and so penetrated with rich and unique virtues that to describe him properly, his mirror can report him truly, and he who imitates him will be but his shadow.

*Osric* Your lordship speaks most correctly of him,

*Hamlet.* How does all this concern us at all ? Why do we in fold the gentleman in the foul vapour of our breath ?

*Osric.* Sir !

*Horatio* Do you not understand your own jargon when it is spoken by another ? You will surely do it, try, sir.

*Hamlet* What is your intention in mentioning this gentleman ?

(Page 218. Lines 103—125)

*Horatio.* His stock of fine words is already exhausted.

*Hamlet* Yes, I mean Laertes, sir.

*Osric* I know you are not ignorant—

*Hamlet.* I wish you knew, sir, yet, if you knew it, would hardly do any credit to me Well, go on, sir.

*Osric* You are not ignorant of what excellence  
*Laertes* is—

*Hamlet* I dare not confess that, lest I should  
 compare with him in excellence, but, to know a man  
 well, were to know himself <sup>perfectly</sup>

*Osric* I mean, sir, for his weapon, but in the im-  
putation laid on him by them in his meed, he's <sup>reput</sup>  
unfellowed unrivall'd <sup>attendance</sup> 14

*Hamlet* What's his weapon?

*Osric* Rapier and dagger.

*Hamlet* That's two of his weapons, but, well

*Osric* The king, sir, hath wagered with him six  
 Barbary horses, against the which he has imponed, 11.  
 as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with <sup>ap</sup>  
 their assigns, as girdle, hangers, and so three of the  
carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very res- <sup>h</sup>  
 ponsive to the hilt, most delicate carriages, and of  
 very liberal conceit <sup>elaborate design</sup> 15

*Hamlet*, What call you the carriages?

*Horatio*. I knew you must be edified by the mar-  
gent, ere you had done <sup>enlighten</sup>

*Osric* The carriages, sir, are the hangers <sup>appropria</sup>

*Hamlet* The phrase would be more germane to the 15.  
 matter, if we could carry cannon by our sides; I  
 would it might be hangers till then. But, on; six  
 Barbary horses against six French swords, their  
 assigns, and three liberal conceited carriages, that's  
 the French bet against the Danish. Why is this 'im-  
 poned,' as you call it? 16

*Osric* The king, sir, hath laid, sir, that in a  
 dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not  
 exceed you three hits; he hath laid on twelve for  
 nine, and it would come to immediate trial, if your <sup>his</sup>  
 lordship would vouchsafe the answer <sup>accept</sup> 16

*Hamlet* How if I answer no?

*Osric*. I mean, my lord, the opposition of your  
 person in trial 16

*Osr.* You are not ignorant of the accomplishments of Laertes—

*Hamlet.* I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in the matter of his accomplishments, but to know a man well would be to know himself

*Osr.* I mean, sir, his skill in the use of the weapon; he is said to be without a rival on account of what is attributed to him by others.

*Hamlet.* What is his weapon?

*Osr.* Rapier and dagger.

*Hamlet.* These are but two of his weapons; but go on.

*Osr.* The King, sir, has 'beted with him six Barbary horses, against which he has staked, as I understand, six French rapiers and poniards, with their equipment as girdle, straps, and so on. Three of the carriages are very exquisite, and match exactly the kites, and they are of most excellent workmanship.

*Hamlet.* What do you call the carriages?

*Horatio.* You need marginal comments before you can understand.

*Osr.* The carriages, sir, are hangers.

*Hamlet.* The description would be more appropriate, if we would carry cannon by our sides. Let it be hangers then. But go on; six Barbary horses against six French swords, their equipment, and their carriages of elaborate design—that is the French bet against,

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the Danish. Why has this bet been made; or better why is this 'imposed', as you put it?

*Osr.* The bet as laid by the king stands thus: in twelve passes between you and Laertes, Laertes will not hit him more than thrice, so it is the ratio of 12 to 9. It would be at once put to the test, if your lordship be agreeable.

*Hamlet.* How, if I say no?

*Osr.* I mean, my lord, if you take up the challenge.

Hamlet Sir, I will walk here in the hall; if it please his majesty, 'tis the breathing time of day <sup>170</sup> ~~er~~ with me, let the foils be brought, the gentleman, willing, and the king hold his purpose, I will win <sup>171</sup> ~~agree~~ for I am as I can, if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the old hits ~~or~~ <sup>or</sup> ~~strikes~~

Osric Shall I re deliver you e'en so:

Hamlet. To this effect, sir, after what flourish <sup>172</sup> ~~his~~ your nature will <sup>173</sup> ~~offer~~

Osric I commend my duty to your lordship.

Hamlet Your-, yours. [*Exit OSRIC.*] He does well to commend it himself; there are no tongues <sup>174</sup> ~~but~~ else for 's turn <sup>175</sup> ~~newly fledged~~

Horatio. This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head:

Hamlet. He did comply with his dug before he sucked <sup>176</sup> ~~181~~ it. Thus has Le—and many more of the same hary, that I know the drossy age dotes on—only got the tune of the time and outward habit of encounter, a kind of jesty collection which carries them through and through the most fond winnon.ed opinions, and do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out <sup>180</sup>

# Enter a Lord

Lord. My lord, his majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him, that you attend him in the hall, he sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time. <sup>182</sup>

Hamlet. I am constant to my purposes, they follow the king's pleasure. if his fitness speaks, mine is ready, now, or whensoever, provided I be so able as now

Lord The king, and queen, and all are coming down

Hamlet In happy time <sup>187</sup> ~~just in the right time~~

Lord The queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes before you fall to play.

Hamlet She well instructs me.

[*Exit Lord.*

Horatio You will lose this wager, my lord. <sup>201</sup>

*Hamlet.* Sir, I shall walk here in the hall : if it may please his majesty, it is the time for me to take exercise ; let the rapiers be brought, provided the gentleman is agreeable and the king does not change his mind, I will do my best to win for him. If I cannot, all that I suffer is humiliation and a few odd strokes

*Osríc.* Shall I take back this message ?

*Hamlet.* This is my sense ; you may decorate it according to your taste.

*Osríc.* My service to your lordship.

*Hamlet.* Mine is yours. [*Exit Osríc*]. He does well to commend his duty himself, for none else can do it in his own way

*Horatio.* This lap wing runs away with the shell on his head having put on the hat).

*Hamlet.* He must have used ceremony with his mother's breast before sucking it. Thus has he—and there are many more of the same type whom the silly age is very fond of—picket up the courtly phrases and airs, which enables him to sport the silliest and flimsiest views ; but bring them to a test, and they will burst.

*Enter Lord.*

*Lord.* My lord, his majesty sent word to you by

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young *Osríc*, who turns with the answer that you will wait upon him in the hall ; he sends me to know whether your lordship will be pleased to contend with *Laertes*, or whether your lordship will take more time over it.

*Hamlet.* I have not changed my purpose which depends on the king's pleasure. If he says that it is all right for him, I am ready to please him, either now or when soever, if I continue to be as able as now.

*Lord.* The king, the queen and all courtiers are attending.

*Hamlet.* I agree.

*Lord.* The queen desires you to show some courtesy to *Laertes* before you enter the contest.

[*Exit Lord*]

*Hamlet.* It is a good advice.

*Horatio.* You will lose the bet, my lord

Hamlet, I do not think so; since he went into France, I have been in continual practice, I shall win at the odds. But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart, but it is no matter 205

Py Horatio. Nay good my lord,—

Hamlet It is but foolery, but it is such a kind of gain-giving as would perhaps trouble a woman

Horatio If your mind dislike any thing, obey it; I will forestal their repair hither, and say you are not fit. 210

Hamlet Not a whit, we defy augury, there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come, if it be not to come, it will be now, if it be not now, yet it will come, the readiness is all. Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is 't to leave betimes? Let us. *anything* *die yourself*

Enter KING, QUEEN, LAERTES, Lords, OSRIC, and Attendants with foils, &c

King Come, Hamlet, come and take this hand from me.

[The king puts the hand of LAERTES into that of HAMLET

Hamlet Give my your pardon, sir; I've done you wrong But pardon 't, as you are a gentleman.

This presence knows, and you must needs have heard, 220

How I am punish'd with a sore distraction. *grave*

What I have done

That might your nature, honour and exception *dislike*

Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.

Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet 225

If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,

And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,

Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it

Who does it then? His madness If't be so,

Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd: *party* 230

His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

Sir, in this audience,

Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil

*Hamlet* I do not think so, since he went to France, I have kept practising, I shall win with the advantage that is allowed. But you cannot have any idea how I am troubled in mind, it does not matter, however.

*Horatio.* Nay, my good lord—

*Hamlet.* It is silly ; it is such a misgiving as would trouble woman.

*Horatio* It there is a foreboding in your mind, you would obey it, I shall meet them before they assemble in the all, and tell them that you are not fit.

*Hamlet* Not at all, I disregard omens. Even when a parrow falls, it is watched by providence. If the thing is to happen now, it cannot happen in the future ; if it cannot come in the future, it will happen now, if it does not come now, it will come in the future ; in any case we shall have to be prepared for the worst. Since no man knows what life may bring, what does it matter if we leave it earlier ?

*Enter KING, QUEEN, LAERTES, LORDS, OSCRIC, and*

*Attendants, with souls, etc.*

*King* Come, Hamlet, come, and grasp this hand

*[The King put Laertes' hand into Hamlet's]*



Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,  
That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house,  
And hurt my brother.

*Laertes* I am satisfied in nature,  
Whose motive, in this case, should stir me most  
To my revenge, but in my terms of honour  
I stand aloof, and will no reconciliation,  
Till by some elder masters, of known honour,  
I have a voice and precedent of peace,  
To keep my name ungar'd. But till that time, <sup>221</sup>  
I do receive your offer'd love like love,  
And will not wrong it.

*Hamlet.* I embrace it freely;  
And will this brother's wager frankly play <sup>245</sup>  
Give us the foils. Come on, ~~with the foils~~

*Laertes* Come, one for me.  
*Hamlet.* I'll be your foil, *Laertes*, in mine ignorance  
Your skill shall, like a star i' the darkest night,  
Stick fiery off indeed

*Laertes* You mock me, sir.  
*Hamlet.* No, by this hand <sup>250</sup>  
*King* Give them the foils, young *Osric* Cousin *Hamlet*,  
You know the wager?

*Hamlet.* Very well, my lord;  
Your Grace hath laid the odds o' the weaker side.  
*King* I do not fear it, I have seen you both;  
But since he is better'd, we have therefore odds <sup>255</sup>

*Laertes.* This is too heavy, let me see another  
*Hamlet.* This likes me well. These foils have all a length?  
*Osric.* Ay, my good lord. [I hey prepare to play.]

*King* Set me the stoups of wine upon that table.  
If *Hamlet* give the first or second hit, <sup>260</sup>  
Or quit in answer of the third exchange, ~~return but~~  
Let all the battlements their ordnance fire, *Cannon*  
The king shall drink to *Hamlet's* better breath; ~~triumph~~  
And in the cup an union shall be throw,  
Richer than that which four successive kings <sup>265</sup>

let me deny that I intended to do wrong to you, and let this clear me in your kindly estimation. I have shot my arrow over the house and hurt my brother.

*Laertes.* I am satisfied, otherwise my natural impulse would have demanded uncompromising revenge ; but I hold off from you until there is satisfaction of my honour, and refuse to be reconciled until, I am persuaded by some elderly gentlemen of known integrity to the effect that I do not suffer in reputation. Pending this I accept your offer of friendship at its true value

*Hamlet.* I agree to your proposal, and will play this stake made in a friendly spirit. Give us the foils. Come on.

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*Laertes.* Let me have a foil for myself.

*Hamlet.* I shall serve as your foil. your skill, set off against my ignorance, shall blaze like a star in the darkest night.

*Laertes.* You make sport of me, sir.

*Hamlet.* No, I swear by this hand of mine.

*King.* Give them the foils. Osrlic. Cousin Hamlet, you know the terms of the bet.

*Hamlet.* Very well, my lord. Your lordship has backed the weaker side.

*King.* I am confident of your success. I have seen you both, and since he has improved, I have backed you.

*Laertes.* This is too heavy ; let me see another.

*Hamlet.* I accept the conditions. Are these foils of the same length ?

*They prepare to play.*

*King.* Set the tankards of wine upon the table. If Hamlet gives the first or second hit, or pay off Laertes in the third round, let it be celebrated by the discharge of guns. The king shall drink, wishing better endurance of Hamlet, and into the cup he will put a jewel symbolical of their union.

In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups ;  
 And let the kettle to the trumpet speak, *cl-rum*  
 The trumpet to the cannoneer without,  
 The cannons to the heavens, the heavens to earth,  
 'Now the king drinks to Hamlet !' Come, begin, 270  
 And you, the judges, bear a wary eye *Watchful*

*Hamlet* Come on, sir.

*Laertes* Come, my lord. [*They play*

*Hamlet* One.

*Laertes* No

*Hamlet.* Judgment

*Orric.* A hit, a very palpable hit *obvious*

*Laertes.* Well, again

*King.* Stay, give me drink *Hamlet*, this pearl is  
 thine,

Here's to thy health. Give him the cup 275

[*Trumpets sound, and cannon shot off within.*

*Hamlet* I'll play this bout first, set it by awhile  
 Come — [*They play*] Another hit ; what say you ?

*Laertes.* A touch, a touch, I do confess.

*King* Our son shall win

*Queen* He's fat, and scant of breath

Here, *Hamlet*, take my napkin, rub thy brows ; 280

The queen carouses to thy fortune, *Hamlet*

*Hamlet* Good madam !

*King* Gertrude, do not drink.

*Queen* I will, my lord, I pray you, pardon me.

*King* [*Aside.*] It is the poison'd cup ! it is too late

*Hamlet.* I dare not drink yet, madam, by and by. 285

*Queen* Come, let me wipe thy face.

*Laertes* My I'll hit him now.

*King.* I do not think 't

*Laertes* [*Aside*] And yet 'tis almost 'gainst my con-  
 science

*Hamlet* Come, for the third, *Laertes* You but dally *not fair*  
 I pray you, pa-s with your best violence,  
 I am afraid you make a wanton of me

richer than what four successive kings of Denmark have ever worn. Gave me the cups. Let the drum sound to the trumpet, and trumpet announce to the gunner outside, and the guns, to the heavens, and he heavens, to the earth, "Now the king drinks Hamlet's health." Well, start, and you the judges, keep a watch

*Hamlet.* Come on sir.

[*They play.*

*Laertes.* Come my lord.

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*Hamlet.* One.

*Laertes.* No.

*Hamlet.* I call for the opinion of the judges.

*Osric.* It is a hit, and a very obvious one.

*Laertes.* Well : again.

*King.* Stop, give me the drink. Hamlet, this pearl is yours. I drink your health. [*Trumpets sound, and cannon shot off within.*

Give him the cup.

*Hamlet.* Let me first finish this round, put it aside for a while. Come—(*They play*). Another hit. What do you say ?

*Laertes.* It is a mere touch, I say.

*King.* Our son shall win.

*Queen.* He is fat and short-winded. Here, Hamlet, take my handkerchief and mop your forehead. The queen drinks to your success, Hamlet,

*Hamlet.* Thank you, madam.

*King.* Gertrude, do not drink

*Queen.* I will, my lord ; forgive me.

*King* [*Aside*] It is the poisoned cup, it is too late. [*Drinks.*

*Hamlet.* I dare not drink yet, madam, it will be by and by.

*Queen.* Come, let my wipe your face.

*Laertes.* My lord, I will hit him now.

*King.* I do not think so

*Laertes* [*Aside*] Ye, my conscience forbids it.

*Hamlet.* Come for the third round, Laertes. You are not serious ; put all your energy into it ; I wonder you trifle with me.

*Laertes.* Say you so? come on [*They play.*]

*Osrice.* Nothing, neither way.

*Laertes.* Have at you now

[*LAERTES wounds HAMLET; then, in scuffling, they change rapiers, and HAMLET wounds LAERTES*]

*King.* Part them! they are incens'd.

*Hamlet.* Nay, come, again [*The QUEEN falls.*]

*Osrice.* Look to the queen! there, ho! 295

*Horatio.* They bleed on both sides. How is it, my lord?

*Osrice.* How is it, *Laertes*?

*Laertes.* Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe,

*Osrice;*

I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery.

*Hamlet.* How does the queen?

*King.* She swoonds to see them bleed 300

*Queen.* No, no, the drink, the drink,—O my dear *Hamlet*!

The drink, the drink; I am poison'd [*Dies.*]

*Laertes.* O villainy! Ho! let the door be lock'd:

Treachery! seek it out. [*LAERTES falls.*]

*Laertes.* It is here, *Hamlet*. *Hamlet*, thou art slain.

No medicine in the world can do thee good,

In thee there is not half an hour of life;

The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,

Unbated and envenom'd. The foul practice

Hath turn'd itself on me; lo! here I lie,

Never to rise again. Thy mother's poison'd

I can no more. The king, the king's to blame. 310

*Hamlet.* The point envenom'd too!—

Then, venom, to thy work

[*Stabs the king*]

*All.* Treason! treason! 315

*King.* O! yet defend me, friends, I am but hurt

*Hamlet.* Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned

Dane,

Drink off this potion;—is thy union here?

Follow my mother

[*King dies.*]

*Laertes.* He is justly serv'd;

*Laertes* Do you say so? Come on [*They play.*]  
*Osric.* It is not hit either way.

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*Laertes.* I hit you now.

[*Laertes wounds Hamlet; then in scuffling they  
change rapiers, and Hamlet wounds Laertes.*]

*King* Separate them, they are in a rage.

*Hamlet.* Now come again [*The queen falls.*]

*Osric.* Attend to the queen there, ho!

*Horatio.* Both of them are bleeding. How are you, my lord?

*Osric.* How are you, *Laertes*?

*Laertes.* I have been caught as a wood cock in my own trap, *Osric* I fall a victim to my own treachery.

*Hamlet.* How is the queen doing?

*King* On seeing them bleed she has fainted.

*Queen* No, no, the drink, the drink—O my dear *Hamlet*,  
 I am poisoned. [*Dies.*]

*Hamlet* O foul play! Ho! Let the door be locked. Let me seek out the traitor.

*Laertes.* It is here, *Hamlet*, *Hamlet*, you are slain. No medicine in the world can give you life again; you cannot live more than half an hour. The rapier in your hand has killed you; it is a sharp and poisoned weapon; the plot I am guilty of has recoiled on me. So, here I lie, never to rise again; your mother is poisoned. I can say no more; all the guilt is the *King's*

*Hamlet* The point of the rapier is poisoned too. Let the poison do its work than. [*Stabs the King.*]

*All.* Treason! treason!

*King* Oh. Yet defend me, I am only hurt.

*Hamlet.* Here, you lascivious, murderous, wicked Dane, drink off this poison. Let not your union with my mother be limited to the world. Follow my mother.

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*Laertes* He is well paid. It is a poison mixed by him—

It is a poison temper'd by himself 320  
 Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.  
 Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,  
 Nor thine on me! [Dies]

*Hamlet* Heaven make thee free of it! I follow thee  
 I am dead, Horatio Wretched queen, adieu! 325  
 You that look pale and tremble at this chance,  
 That are but mutes or audience to this act,  
 Had I but time,—as this fell sergeant, death,  
 Is strict in his arrest,—O! I could tell you—  
 But let it be Horatio, I am dead, 330  
 Thou liv'st, report me and my cause aright  
 To the unsatisfied

*Horatio* Never believe it,  
 I am more an antique Roman than a Dane:  
 Here's yet some liquor left

*Hamlet.* As thou'rt a man,  
 Give me the cup let go, by heaven, I'll have't  
 O God! Horatio, what a wounded name, *how much*  
 Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me  
 If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart, *most*  
 Absent thee from felicity awhile, *reflect*  
 And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain, *now*  
 To tell my story. [March afar off, and shot within.]

What war like noise is this?

*Osr* Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland,  
 To the ambassadors of England gives  
 This war like volley.

*Hamlet* O! I die, Horatio;  
 The potent poison quite o'er crows my spirit. 345  
 I cannot live to hear the news from England,  
 But I do prophesy the election lights  
 On Fortinbras he has my dying voice; *great and small*  
 So tell him, with the occurrents, more and less,  
 Which have solicited—The rest is silence [Dies.]

*Horatio* Now cracks a noble heart Good-night sweet  
 prince, 351

self Let us forgive each other, noble Hamlet. My death and my father's do not rest on thee, nor yours on me.

[ *Dies,*

*Hamlet.* May God free you from all blame for it ! I am following you I am dead, Horatio. Unhappy queen, farewell. You who look pale and shudder at this calamity and seem to mourn it or are but on lookers, if I had time—as death already grips me—Oh, I could tell you—but let it alone. Horatio I am dead ; thou live ; report me fairly and give a good account of my cause to those who are not convinced

*Horatio.* Never think that I am going to outlive you I am in spirit more like an ancient Roman than like a Dane Here is yet some poisoned wine left.

*Hamlet.* As you are a man, give me the cup ; let it go, by heaven ; I will drink it, O good Horatio, I leave behind me a besmirched name, if things are left unexplained. If you ever loved me sincerely, hold off your happiness for a while, and drag your painful days in this rude world until you have told my story.

[ *March at some distance, and shot within.*

What martial music is this ?

*Osric* Young Fortinbras, having returned from the conquest of Poland, greets the ambassadors of England with the discharge of guns.

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*Hamlet.* Oh, I die, Horatio The powerful poison quite overcomes my spirit I cannot live long enough to hear the news from England Let me announce before hand that Fortinbras the elected king, he has the authority of my dying voice So give him my message and tell him all the circumstances, great or small, which have impelled me to act as I have done. The rest is buried in silence

[ *Dies,*

*Horatio.* Now breaks a noble heart ; good night, sweet prince, May band of angels sing you to sleep ! Why does the



And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest !  
 Why does the drum come hither ! [March within]  
*Enter FORTINBRAS, the English Ambassadors, and Others.*

*Fortinbras* Where is this sight ?

*Horatio* What is it ye would see ?  
 If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search 355  
*Fortinbras.* This quarry cries on havoc O proud death !  
 What feast is toward in thine eternal cell,  
 That thou so many princes at a shot  
 So bloodily hast struck ?

*First Ambassador* The sight is dismal ,  
 And our affairs from England come too late 360  
 To ears are senseless that should give us hearing,  
 To tell him his commandment is fulfill'd,  
 That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.  
 Where should we have our thanks ?

*Horatio* Not from his mouth,  
 Had it the ability of life to thank you 365  
 He never gave commandment for their death.  
 But since, so jump upon this bloody question,  
 You from the Polack wars, and you from England,  
 Are here arriv'd, give order that these bodies  
 High on a stage be placed to the view ; 370  
 And let me speak to the yet unknowing world  
 How these things came about so, shall you hear,  
 Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts, *monstrous deeds*  
 Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,  
 Of deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause, 375  
 And, in this upshot, purposes mistook *accident*  
 Fall'n on the inventors' heads, all this can I  
 Truly deliver

*Fortinbras* Let us haste to hear it,  
 And call the noblest to the audience  
 For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune ; 380  
 I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,  
 Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me

*Horatio.* Of that I shall have also cause to speak,

music of the drum approach in this direction ?

[ *March within.*

*Enter FORTINBRAS, the English AMBASSADORS, and others*

*Fortinbras* Where is this sad spectacle ?

*Horatio* What is it you would see ? If anything sorrowful and amazing, you need not go farther

*Fortinbras* This heap of dead proclaim an indiscriminate slaughter. O proud death, what a feast is ready to begin in your infernal cell—and you have struck down so many princes at one swoon.

*First Ambassador.* The sight is frightful, and we come too late with our embassy from England. The ears that should have given us audience are now stilled in death, when we have come to tell him that his command has been executed—that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead. There is none to thank us for this

*Horatio* If he had been alive to thank you, you would have received no thanks from him. He gave no command for their death, But since so pat upon this blood affair you have arrived from the Polish wars and you from England.

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Give orders that these bodies are placed high on a stage to be seen by the public, and let me speak to the people who do not yet know how these things have happened. So you shall hear of lewd, bloody, monstrous deeds, of hasty judgments, accidental slaughters, of deaths, contrived by cunning and unnatural cause, and finally of mistaken purposes, which recoiled on their authors. All these things I can relate in their true details

*Fortinbras.* Let us hear as quickly as possible, and summon the noblest to be present. As for me, it is with a sorrowful heart that I accept my fortune. I have some traditional right in the kingdom, which it is now my opportunity to claim.

*Horatio.* Of that matter too there will be occasion to speak—and it is a message I am going to deliver from the

And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more :  
But let this same be presently perform'd, 385  
Even while men's minds are wild, lest more mischance  
On plots and errors happen.

*Fortinbras*                      Let four captains

Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage ;  
For he was likely, had he been put on,  
To have prov'd most royally and, for his passage, 390  
The soldiers' music and the rites of war  
Speak loudly for him  
Take up the bodies such a sight as this  
Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.  
Go, bid the soldiers shoot 395

[A dead march. *Exeunt, bearing off the bodies.*  
after which a peal of ordnance is shot off.]

mouth of Hamlet, which will be supported by others, but let this be at once performed while men's minds are full of excitement, lest more misfortunes, including plots and errors follow

*Fortinbras* Let four captains bear Hamlet like a soldier, to the stage, for he would have made the most efficient and stateliest king, if he had had the chance and in honour of his departure let military music and ceremony sing his glory. Take up the bodies; such a sight as this might well become a battle field, but here it seems out of place. Go and bid the soldiers discharge their guns.

[A dead march, *Exeunt* bearing off the dead bodies; after which a peal of ordnance is shot off

(Page 235. Lines 365—391)

## ACT I

### SCENE I

**Analysis** It is midnight when the play opens, and the scene is the platform before the castle at Elsinore. Bernardo and Marcellus enter to relieve Francisco who has been on duty as sentinel. They have brought Horatio with them, and Horatio is going to keep watch with them to see if the ghost appears again, for they have told Horatio about this appearance of the ghost, and Horatio is incredulous.

Just as Bernardo tells again the story of the ghost who had appeared last night, the ghost makes his appearance again, the ghost seems to be the late king in full armour, solemnly stalking past them. Horatio, though shaken by fear, addresses the ghost. But the ghost makes no answer, and disappears. Horatio now seems to be convinced that it must be the late king.

Marcellus wants to know why war-like preparations are proceeding, which keep men busy day and night. Horatio tells him that the war-like preparations are being carried on against the young Fortinbras of Norway, for he is arming in order to recover the lands lately lost by his father to Hamlet, the late king, and Horatio connects the visitation of the ghost with this. He recalls the fearful portents that preceded the fall of Julius Caesar.

The ghost reappears as he talks with his friends. He addresses the ghost once more though there may be risk in doing so. He impresses the ghost to speak if anything is to be done that may give him peace or save the country from any unknown peril. Then the cock crows and the ghost departs. They try to stop him and run at him with a spear. All three are now seized with fear and to disengage their minds from such terror, Horatio and Marcellus discuss the popular superstition about the cock-crow at dawn, dispersing the spirits of the air, fire, earth and water and sending them home to their graves. With the dawn the watch breaks off. They are going to inform Hamlet of what they have seen.

**Critical Note** The opening scene strikes the note of mystery and gloom. In a tense, expectant atmosphere the

conversation begins, and it is all about the ghost whom Bernardo and Marcellus had seen last night. To clinch the argument going on between them, as it were, the ghost appears. The fear that seizes upon them, infects the spectators too. Every point is skilfully developed to yield its full emotional value. The ghost, visible and in motion, is perhaps the most difficult thing to manage, and a revenge play as it is, it cannot do without a ghost. Shakespeare avoids all that has been crude and unsophisticated about the supernatural—and is concerned only with creating the ghostly thrill with the sense of something left uncommunicated; the play thus opens with an element of suspense, which is resolved later.

Detailed attention to external conditions—the midnight hour, the impenetrable darkness, the hush and silence—"not a mouse stirring," the sharp, biting cold—serves to increase the sense of gloom. The opening scene might well be an appropriate background to the action, physically and spiritually too. It mysteriously communicates to us an impression of sadness and impending calamity. The departing sentry says that he is "sick at heart," and leaves behind a nervous tension that persists to the end.

Now why does the ghost appear and shake them with terror? The ghost is the ghost of the late king, Hamlet, and he has been murdered by his brother; before the play begins the crime should be disclosed both to the audience and to the person (the son Hamlet after whom the play is named) most affected by it. The opening scene leads up to this disclosure.

#### Notes

A platform before the castle—"Shakespeare probably imagined it as situated on the battlements of the castle, at once a look-out for guards and a commanding position for cannon. Theatrically, I take it, the word denotes the upper-stage, which would explain the unmotivated disappearance of Bernardo in I iv, when his place is taken by Hamlet, seeing that four characters beside the ghost would have overcrowded the gallery which for the rest, with its curtained recess in the middle, would be very convenient for apparition"—J. D. Wilson

1. Who's there—Francisco who is the sentry, should have given the challenge, but it is Bernardo who calls out to Francisco, and Bernardo is coming to relieve him. "The question

and the dialogue that follow emphasise the darkness of the night and jumpiness of the guards"—*J. D. Wilson*

2 Stand—do not advance Unfold yourself—first tell me who you are

3. Long live the king—the watch word. "The watch-word is dramatically ironical in view of all that follows"  
—*J. D. Wilson*

6 Upon your hour—just at the appointed time

8 For this relief . . . thanks—a phrase that has become proverbial.

'tis bitt-r cold—"Shakespeare builds up the atmosphere of the frosty, starlit, northern night as he proceeds"—  
*J. D. Wilson.*

9. Sick at heart—why should he be sick at heart? He has got nothing to do with the action of the play. It seems to foreshadow the heart sickness of Hamlet Francisco might have been troubled in spirit, while on his guard duty in what seemed to be very depressing surroundings Have . . . guard—Bernardo wants to know whether the ghost appeared to him again.

10 No a mouse stirring—the hushed silence must have contributed to the effect of gloom and apprehension.

13 Rivals—partners Bid . . . haste—Bernardo does not want to be alone at his post

14 I think . . . them—I hear their footsteps in the distance

15 Liegemen—subjects Dane—the king of Denmark

19 Is Horatio there—they have persuaded Horatio to come, because Horatio is a scholar, and may, therefore, as they believe, converse with the ghost. A piece of him—a jesting reply which may imply his sceptical attitude—his aloofness from the superstition of his companions, it may also imply that he is hardly the whole of himself, being frozen with cold.

"Horatio's jocularity is contrasted with the nervousness of the others; he does not believe in ghosts. The 1st means, I take it, that he is pierced with cold"—*J. D. Wilson.*

21. Has this thing appear'd—Horatio's incredulity appears in his reference to the ghost as 'this thing', he is not inclined to treat it seriously.

23. Fantasy—imagination. 'tis . . . fantasy—the ghost is nothing but a trick of our imagination

24. Will not . . . him—will not be willing to believe.

25. Touching . . . sight—concerning this apparition which has filled our minds with awe. Seen of us—seen by us.

26. Entreated . . . along—requested him to come along with us.

27. Watch . . . night—wait patiently through the tedious hours of the night for the ghost to appear.

89. Approve our eyes—confirm the evidence of our eyes. Speak to it—Horatio is a scholar, and, therefore, can speak to the ghost. It was believed that a ghost could be either conjured or exorcised in Latin—that a ghost could not resist the counter-spell of Latin. They have brought Horatio along so that he may address the ghost.

30. Tush, tush—nonsense. 'twill not appear—Horatio as a scholar is still sceptical, and dismisses the idea of a ghost.

31. Let us . . . ears—let us once more persuade you to believe by our argument.

32. That . . . story—which are so determined to reject what we described as our personal experience.

33. What . . . seen—since we have seen it for two successive nights, it cannot be an illusion. They emphasize their personal experience—and two of them have seen the ghost.

34. Let us . . . this—Horatio is willing to give Bernardo a chance to convince him. But it is for the benefit of the audience that Bernardo is given the chance to repeat his story.

35. Last night of all—the beginning of Bernardo's speech arrests the attention of the audience. Hushed breath, awe, anticipation are all in it. The ghost comes pat upon his speech and dispels Horatio's doubt, which Bernardo's speech might not have shaken.

36. Yond same star—the same star that was visible last night when the ghost appeared. Pole—polar star.

37. His—its. Had . . . course—had moved. It was evidently a planet. Illume—illuminate.



38. The bell . . . one—it being then one O'clock at night

40. Break thee off—stop your speech. Look . . . again—Bernardo's words, quivering with awe, herald the ghost

41. In the same figure—in the exact likeness

42. Thou art . . . Horatio—Horatio is a scholar, and knows Latin, and, therefore, can address the ghost; compare: Let's call the butler up, for he speaks Latin

And that will daunt the devil

Beaumont and Fletcher: *Night Walker, II*

44. Most like—most like the late king. It horrors . . . wonder—it tortures me with fear and amazement,

45. It would be spoke to—it was the popular belief that a spirit would not speak, until spoken to.

46. Usurp'st this time of night—the idea being that while the ghost should be lying quietly in the grave, it was walking the earth. Usurp'st' might suggest (1), taking possession of the night without right, (2) taking possession of the late king's appearance

47. Together. . . form—in the martial figure of the late king.

48. The majesty. . . Denmark—the late king of Denmark now buried

49. Charge—implore.

50. It takes away—this majestic bearing of the ghost gives a touch of solemn impressiveness to the apparition

51. Stay' speak—Horatio the scholar gets excited, and cries out frantically to the ghost.

52. 'Tis gone . . . answer—the ghost is tongue tied, though it makes it visible. Shakespeare gets the subtlest effect of supernatural by the reticence of the ghost; and a shadow as it is, stalking away with lank steps with a dignity of its own, it must impress the imagination of the audience.

53. How now . . . pale—Horatio who had laughed away the ghost when he first heard of it, now trembles and turns pale, he is now more than convinced of its reality. And it is a triumph for Bernardo and Marcellus.

54. Is not this . . . fantasy—you say that it is a trick of our imagination; do you not now admit the truth of the apparition?

54. Before my God—a solemn asseveration  
 55—57. I might not . . . eyes—I could not have believed  
 this without the positive evidence of my eyes. Sensible—  
 appealing to or apprehended by, the senses. Avouch—  
 testimony.

61. Ambitious Norway—the ambitious king of Norway

62. Parle—conference preliminary to the conclusion of  
 peace.

63. Sledged Polacks—the Poles riding in sledges. It is  
 Melton's reading. E. K. Chambers reads 'sledged polaxe'  
 —i. e. a pole-axe weighted with a sledge or hammer at the  
 back. This reading is preferred by E. K. Chambers for the  
 following reasons: (a) a parle or parley elsewhere in  
 Shakespeare always means a conference, (b) Conference is  
 more likely than a battle to take place on the ice, i. e. on some  
 bordering stream, which would be neutral ground; (c)  
 Horatio only saw the elder Hamlet once and presumably on  
 a peaceful occasion, when his beaver was up so that his  
 appearance be remembered, (d) the whole phrase suits best  
 with some moment of sudden wrath, and not with a day's  
 fighting.

64. Jump—exactly. The dead hour—midnight when all  
 nature seems to be dead. Compare

Now o'er the one half world

*Nature seems dead and wicked dreams abuse*

*The curtain'd sleep—Macbeth, II*

65. With martial stalk—with the steps of a warrior. By  
 our watch—by our post.

66. In what particular . . . not—I do not know what the  
 intention of the ghost should be in walking the earth.

67. In the gross . . . opinion—according to the general  
 drift of my opinion.

68. This bode . . . state—the apparition foreshadows  
 some impending calamity to Denmark.

71. This same street . . . watch—this strenuous and  
 constant vigilance.

72. Toils—causes to toil. So nightly . . . land—keeps  
 the citizens hard at work at night

73. Daily . . . cannon—manufacture of cannon, made  
 of brass, every day

74. Foreign mart . . . war—purchasing of arms and weapons abroad.

75. Impress—compulsory service. Shipwrights—ship-builders

75—76. Whose more task . . . week—who have to work as hard on Sunday as on week days—who have no respite even on Sunday.

77. What . . . toward—what might be in progress  
Sweaty haste—hurried preparations which make men work so hard and sweat

78. Doth make . . . Lay—makes night a time for incessant toil as day, keeps the men at work both day and night

80. The whisper . . . so—I am going to tell you what people discuss under breath among themselves.

81. Whose image . . . us—whose likeness appeared to us just now,

83. Prick'd on—provoked. Emulate—emulous

84. Dared—challenged.

85. This side . . . world—the western world

86. Seal'd compact—agreement duly signed

87. Ratified . . . heraldry—corroborated by the civil law and the formalities of the court of chivalry.

88. Forfeit—surrender and loss.

89. Stood seized of—a legal term still current Conqueror—elder Hamlet.

90. A moiety competent—an equivalent share.

91. Gaged—staked. Had return'd—would have returned.

92. To . . . Fortinbras—to the possession of Fortinbras

93. Had he . . . vanquisher—if he had overcome Hamlet Covenant—agreement

94. Carriage . . . article—meaning of the legal clause.  
Deign'd—drawn up

95. His fell to Hamlet—his lands came into the possession of Hamlet

95. Of unimproved . . . full—of little experience, and fiery and impetuous

97. Skirts—outlying parts

98. Shark'd . . . resolute—collected a band of desperate fellows. Shark'd up—picked up indiscriminately as a shark picks up its prey

99. For food and diet—for hire.

100. That hath . . . in't—which offers some scope for daring and reckless courage.

102. By strong hand—by violence.

103. Terms compulsory—[force of arms] [those foresaid lands—lands forefieted by his father to Hamlet.

104—105. This . . . preparations—the enterprise in which young Fortinbras is going to figure, and for which he has already enlisted a band of desperate fellows, is the cause of warlike preparations on our side.

106. Chief head—main ground.

107. Post haste—expedition in war like preparations. Romance—bustle.

109—111 Well may it sort . . . war—it may give us the clue to the mysterious vision of the ghost, clad in armour, and foreshadowing some calamity to Denmark, as we keep watch, and the ghost is so like the king, who was connected with these wars Sort—suit. Portentous figure—the apparition forboding disaster to the kingdom. Question—subject.

112 A remote . . . mind's eye—just as a speck of dust may irritate the eye, so a trifle like the present apparition may cause uneasiness to the mind

113. Pamily—flourishing

114. The mightiest Caesar—Julius Caesar. The conspirators surrounded him in the senate and stabbed him to death on the Ides (15th) of March.

115. The graves tenantless—the graves emptied out the dead. Sheeted dead—the ghosts, wrapped in white or shrouds

116. Did squeak . . . Rome—wandered about shrieking in the streets of Rome Squeak and Gibber—ghosts have a shrill piping voice

117 Stars with trains of fire—supposed to be comets Dews of blood—"Comets are supposed to cause the phenomenon of red dews, which is now said to proceed from innumerable butterflies, each of which lets fall a drop of red liquid as it emerges from chrysales"—Chambers

118 Disasters in the sun—either unfavourable aspects of the sun in the astrological sense, or sun spots, or an eclipse. Moist star—the moon

119. Upon whose influence . . . stands—who governs the tides of the sea Influence—an astrological term, denoting the power of celestial bodies upon human lives and fortunes Neptune's empire—the seas over which Neptune (the sea-god) rules.

120. Was sick . . . eclipse—was so darkened in an eclipse that it seemed that the last day of judgement was coming.

N. B. It is told that at the second coming of Jesus Christ, 'The moon shall not give her light.' (*Matthew xxxiv*).

117—120 As stars with trains eclipse—"Shakespeare is referring to contemporary events. Solar eclipses were invisible in England on February 25, 1592, July 10, 1600 and December 24, 1601, and lunar ones on February 11 and August 1 1593 (and again in November, 1601). The year 1598 was thus rich in eclipses, those of February 11 and August 6 being total and therefore particularly terrifying to the superstitious populace of those days. On the other hand, astrologers foretold that the evil effects of the 'disaster in the sun' of July 1600, and the Essex rising of February 1601 was hailed as a direct fulfilment of this. At any time between 1598 and 1602 Horatio words here, and Hamlet's III iv 48—51 would have a special appeal to a London audience"—*J. D. Wilson*.

121. Like precursor . . . events—similar portraits of calamities

122 Harbingers — heralds or fore-runners. Still — always.

123 Prologue—introduction A metaphor from drama the prologue in a drama sets forth its scope and purpose. Omen coming on—impending evil

124. Have demonstrated—have been brazened forth both by heaven and earth.

125 Climates—climes ; regions. . .

112 125. *Explanation*—A mote it is . . . country—Horatio makes this speculation on the visitation of the ghost. If may be something of a trivial nature, but just as a speck of dust may irritate the eye, so it may seriously upset the mind Horatio narrates, the omens and portents that preceded the murder of Julius Caesar The graves emptied forth

the ghosts ; the ghosts, wrapped in their shrouds, shrieked and wandered in the streets of Rome. Comets appeared in the sky, and red dews fell on the earth, the sun looked pale and dismal, and the moon that governs the tides of the sea, suffered a total eclipse, as if the judgement day was near. Horatio compares Denmark in the light of these portents, and so he says that similar portents, indicative of an impending calamity, have appeared to Denmark and her people, and the ghost is one of such portents.

126 But soft . . . again—they suspend their conversation as the ghost appears again

127. I'll cross it—to cross the pathway of a ghost was to fall under its malign influence. Though . . . me—though it may cast its evil spell upon me. Stay illusion—Horatio bids the ghost stop

128. If thou hast any . . . voice—Horatio appeals to the ghost to speak since he is convinced that the ghost carries some secret to be imparted.

130 131 If there be any good . . . me—something, if the ghost will be communicative, may be done to give peace to the ghost and bring good luck to Horatio. Horatio speaks in terms of the popular superstition of the day ; it was believed that a ghost walked the earth because it was burdened with some secret (which must be communicated), or with the task of revenge. The latter does not, however, occur to Horatio, he rather thinks that the ghost might have some buried treasure, or might know something of what was going to happen to the country.

133. If thou art . . . fate—if you are aware of what is going to happen to your country.

134 Which . . . avoid—which may be prevented by foreknowledge.

135. O, speak—it is an earnest adjuration to the ghost

136. Upboarded—amassed in secret place

137. Extorted treasure—ill-gotten money. A spirit is said to walk when living it has hidden away some treasure, and haunts such a hiding place.

138 For which—for such hidden treasure Walk in death—leave the grave and appear on earth,

139. Speak of it—speak of the secret that charges your

soul—whether it be anything about the fate of your country, or about some hidden treasure

140 I shall strike partisan—a ghost is nothing but a shadow, and it is no use offering to strike at a ghost.

142. 'Tis here—the ghost seems to be changing places.

143. We do it .. majestic!—we offend the spirit by offering to strike it.

144. To offer. violence—by attempting to hit the ghost

145 Invulnerable—incapable of being wounded.

146. Our vain blows mockery—we strike at the air, when we strike the ghost, and we are thus put to shame.

147. It was about crew—the popular superstition that the ghost must vanish at cock crow.

148 149 And then it started . summons—the cock-crow is a summons to the ghost to depart and the ghost shrank away like a guilty creature when it heard the cock crow.

150. That . warn—which announces day-break like a trumpeter

151. With his loft... throat—with his full-voiced, shrill note.

152. Awake . . . day—the call forth the morning. The god of day is a classical idea

153 Wether in sea—air—there are spirits inhabiting different elements N B The spirits of the air are called *undines*; the spirits of the fire, *salamanders*, the spirits of the earth, *gnomes*, the spirits of the air, *sylphs*

154 Extravagant—wandering Erring—also means the same thing Hies—hastens.

155 Confine—place of confinement.

155 156 Of the truth probation—the present instance proved the truth of this Probation—proof.

157. Faded—melted into the air.

158 'Gainst comes—i. e., in anticipation of the Christmas season.

159 Saviour's birth—the birth of Jesus Christ

160 The bird of dawning—the cock which heralds the dawn The bird long—Towards the end of December the cocks, reversing their usual practice, crow in the evening hours before midnight. The cock crow is usually associated

with the dawn and the change of habits just when nights are longest, is inter-sting."

161. No spirit .....abroad—no spirit leaves the grave and appears on the earth.

162. The nights wholesome—the malignant influence of evil spirits at night is not heard of Strike—exercise a malignant influence. Compare the expression—"Moon-struck", lunacy formerly believed to be caused by the influence of the moon.

163. Takes—bewitches Used of the malignant influence of supernatural powers. To charm—for example, to cast an evil eye.

164. Hallow'd—sacred. Gracious—benign.

165. But, look, the morn . . . clad—N. B. There is an overflow of poetry in these speeches. Hamlet—must have been written in the plenitude of Shakespeare's powers, so we find poetical phrases, conceptions and imagery running to superfluity everywhere in the play. Of course it is an attempt to keep their minds off the fear that took possession of them lately Russet—in Elizabethan English it meant grey, while now it means reddish-brown In russet clad—a pictorial description of the mist through which the sun breaks.

167. Walks o'er . . . hill—here is the whole picture of sunrise; the hill in the east first catches the early rays of the sun, which begin to gleam on the dew that covers the hill. A beautiful instance of personification; the morning, wrapt in a grey mantle, walks over the dew of the high eastern hill.

N B "In Horatio's lovely piece of scene-painting the word *russet*, used to describe the indeterminate reddish-brown or grey of the sky at day-break, recalls the coarse home spun cloth, which is its original sense, and so gives birth to the image of dawn as a labourer moulting the hill to his work of the day, his mantle thrown across his shoulder"

—J. D. Wilson.

169. Impart—communicate.

161. This spirit . . . him—this spirit which discloses nothing to us, will speak to Hamlet.

173. As needful . . . loves—as our friendship bids us tell Hamlet everything.

175. Conveniently—at his leisure.



## SCENE II

*Analysis* —The King (Claudius) holds a council. First, he makes a formal and studied speech about his late brother who is mourned by him and all Denmark. While he owes his duty to the late king, he owes a duty to himself and his countrymen, and out of his sense of duty he has married his late sister-in law, now the queen and a partner of the throne. This step has been taken with the consent of all his councillors. It is with grief that he has paid his respects to his brother—and it is his duty to assume his responsibilities.

The immediate concern is to counter the preparation of young Fortinbras to invade Denmark. He demands the restoration of the lands his father had lost, thinking that Denmark has fallen into weakness. Claudius proposes to send a note to the King of Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras, who, being weak and bed-ridden is unaware of the activities of his nephew. Cornelius and Voltimand are being sent to negotiate with the King of Norway so that he may stop any further proceeding of his nephew in this matter.

Next Claudius turns to Laertes who desires his leave to go to France, having come hence to attend the coronation. The king readily grants his desire when he learns that Polonius has already given his assent. Last of all Claudius addresses Hamlet. Both king and queen are anxious to get him discard his mourning. In a stilted, hypocritical speech Claudius begs him to remember that it is no use seeking his noble father in the dust for the death of a father is common, and there is no reason why it should be particular with Hamlet. He naturally resents his mother's cold tone and replies that his grief is too real to have anything to do with the outward trappings of woe. Claudius argues that keeping it up so long is impious, and begs him to discard his mourning and think kindly of him as a father, and professes fatherly affection for him. He is not going to let him go back to school in Wittenberg. The queen adds her own entreaties, and Hamlet promises to obey her. The king appears to be pleased, and retires to celebrate it with carousal.

Hamlet who has been so chafing inside, now gives vent to his feelings. He is just sick of the world. He compares it to an unweeded garden possessed by things rank and

gross in nature. His mother's hasty marriage is a shock he cannot get over. His father is but two months dead; it might be even less than two months. His mother should have chosen to marry his uncle, so unworthy compared to her late husband—and his father was so affectionate to his mother that he would not let the winds visit her face too roughly. His faith in womankind has been totally shattered by his mother's conduct. His heart is breaking within, for he cannot speak of it to anybody else.

Hamlet is now approached by Horatio, Marcellus and Bernardo. Hamlet is surprised to find Horatio there having left Wittenberg. He cannot believe that Horatio has come to attend his father's funeral. He must have come to his mother's wedding. Then Hamlet tells Horatio that he seems to see his father in his mind's eye. Horatio takes this opportunity to tell him that he saw his father's ghost last night. He is told that first Marcellus and Bernardo saw the ghost of his father, a warlike figure resembling his father who appeared at midnight and walked thrice before them, and that Horatio later kept watch with them, and found all that they said to be true, and addressed the ghost who might have spoken but departed as the cock crowed.

Hamlet satisfies himself about a few details—whether he was armed from head to foot, whether they saw his face, whether he looked frowning, whether he was pale or red, and so on. Then he decides to watch with them that very night, and begs them to keep the matter secret. His father's spirit in arms! There is some foul play—that is the idea running in his head.

*Critical Note.*—We see Hamlet at the king's council—a silent, solitary figure having little interest in all that goes on around him. He has not yet discarded his mourning for his father, and it gives him an impressive dignity.

Claudius opens the council with a brief reference to the death of his brother (Hamlet's father) in a constrained speech. And as he begins to talk of the business for which the council has been called, viz, coming to an understanding with the King of Norway, there is nothing halting or constrained in his speech. He does not seem to be wanting in intelligence, Kingly dignity and practical fitness.

Hamlet stands aloof from the proceedings of the council. Claudius is shrewd enough to sense his antagonism, but drops no hint of it. His mother, duller in perception and sensibilities, irritates Hamlet by her tactless remarks.

The soliloquy that follows the break-up of the council reveals Hamlet's mental reaction to all that has happened—his mother's hasty marriage particularly. Disillusion and cynicism have gone deep into his soul. It is all the result of his morbid brooding over his mother's conduct. His seems to have idolized his father, and as he cannot help comparing his father with his uncle, the grossness and inferiority of the latter being too obvious, his mother's conduct seems to be all the more reprehensible.

We find Hamlet at loose ends distracted with his grief for his father's death which has something suspicious about it, and amazed at his mother's conduct. Naturally when he learns that his father's spirit has lately appeared he begins to suspect "some foul play."

It is a long scene, putting us in possession of all relevant facts necessary for the understanding of the play. We meet Hamlet, and find what causes him to suffer; we gaze into the depth of his acutely sensitive being, shaken by grief and moral confusion, and are aware of the secret antagonism between him and his uncle.

### NOTES

Enter The King, Queen, etc.—The scene opens with a bridal procession, and Hamlet enters last, he is in black, which contrasts with court-ropes in which others appear.

1-2 Though yet of Hamlet . . . green—though we cannot yet forget the death of Hamlet our dear brother; though it still rankles in our heart. N B The King holds a council and opens it with a reference to his brother's death. The opening speech, referring to his brother's death, sounds rather hollow and banal.

3 To bear grief—to carry heavily laden hearts.

4 To be contracted . . . woe—to have a distracted look of sorrow

5 Yet so far nature—good sense has so far restricted our natural disposition to indulge in mourning him,

we have forgotten' our duty to ourselves and to our countrymen.

6 7. We with wisest sorrow . . . ourselves—while we cherish his memory in our hearts, and have not ceased mourning him, we have not forgotten our duty to ourselves and to our countrymen.

9. Jointress to—partners in. War-like state—the war-like preparations going on in Denmark have been referred to in the opening scene. The council, called by the King, is to deal with this matter

10 Defeated joy—joy that has been marred.

11. An auspicious . . . eye—an eye blessing with a smile the union between Claudius and Hamlet's mother, and shedding tears in grief for his brother's death.

12 With mirth . . . marriage—with an incompatible union and interchange of joy and grief, for the joy of wedding seems to have been transferred partly to the funeral and the grief of the funeral, to the wedding. The antithetical sentences of Claudius prove that his speech, referring to the death of his brother, is studied, formal and insincere

13 Dole—grief.

14-15. Nor have we . . . wisdom—we did not fail to consult you in this matter of wedding, and we have acted with your superior wisdom. Barr'd—shut out. Your better wisdoms—their 'better wisdoms' should have offered the succession to the throne to Hamlet, the son, and not to the brother, the councillors were evidently suborned by Claudius.

15 16. Which have . . . along—your better counsel has freely supported the steps I have taken (marrying his brother's wife and succeeding to the throne) For all . . . thanks—Claudius formally thanks all the councillors.

17. Now follows—what we have next to consider is.

18. Holding . . . worth—having estimated our strength to be inadequate. Supposal—supposition

19. By our late . . . death—in consequence of the death of my brother lately.

20 Our state . . . . frame—our Kingdom to have fallen to pieces.

21. Collegued with—supported by. Dream of his advantage—illusion of a good opportunity, which he entertained in his mind.

- 22 Pester—annoy Message—demand  
 23. Importing—relating to, having for import  
 24. Bonds of law—legal formalities  
 17-25. Now follows brother—what we have to consider next is this following the death of my brother young Fortinbras supposed that we were too weak to resist his demand or that our Kingdom had fallen to pieces, and entertaining such an illusory notion of his advantage, has started annoying us with his claim for those lands which his father had surrendered, ratified by the law, to my late courageous brother  
 26. For this . . . meeting—for the occasion of the council.  
 28 Norway—king of Norway.  
 29 Impotent—weak and infirm Bedrid—confined to bed  
 29-30. Scarcely . . . purpose—is hardly aware of his nephew's intention  
 30-31. To suppress . . . herein—to stop his nephew from proceeding any further in this matter. In that—in so far as. Levies—troops collected.  
 32 Proportions—quotas of troops  
 33 Subject—collective use for subjects  
 36-37. Power . . . King—power of carrying on negotiations with the king.  
 38 Delated—set forth in detail.  
 37-38 The scope . . . allow—the limit allowed to you by the clauses set forth in detail  
 39. Let your haste . . . duty—use all expedition in performing your duty  
 40 In that . . . duty—in this matter and in all other respects we will never fail in our duty.  
 41 Nothing—not at all.  
 43. Suit—petition  
 44-45 You cannot . . . voice—any reasonable demand that is to be made by you, will be granted by the King of Denmark.  
 45-46 What wouldst . . . asking—I cannot imagine that you cannot ask anything of me, and that anything you ask cannot be granted by me N.B. "The king positively coos over Laertes, caressing him with his name four times in nine lines"—Harold Child

47. The head.....heart—the head is not more allied to the heart.

48. Instrumental — helpful (as in lifting food to the mouth).

47 49. The head ... .. father—the head cannot act more in union with the heart or the hand with the mouth than I with your father. Claudius cannot forget that Polonius succeeded in winning over the councillors in favour of his election to the throne. And in this gushing speech he expresses his gratefulness to Polonius

50 Dread—used with an adjectival force

53. To show . . . coronation—to attend the coronation and offer my allegiance to you.

55. My thoughts ..... France—I long to go back to France.

56. Bow them . . . . .pardon—my thoughts and wishes which now turn towards France, now wait upon your pleasure and kind permission.

58 Wrung—extorted.

59. Laborious petition—long and earnest prayer.

60. Upon his will . . . . consent—I had to yield to his request since he was so bent on going back to France.

62. Take . . . . .thine—may you have the best of time in France, and make the most of it.

63. Graces—virtues.

65. A little . . . . . kind—(1) a little more than a cousin and less than a son, (as the marriage is incestuous), (2) more than a cousin, but there is no love lost between us Hamlet means that there is something more than mere kinship between them, but *kind* is used vaguely it may mean either "natural, according to kind or natural" (original sense) or "well disposed, friendly"

White asks, "Is it necessary to say that Hamlet means in marrying my mother you have made yourself something more than my kinsman and at the same time have shown yourself unworthy of our race, our kind?"

66 How is it . . . . you—Claudius notices and remarks on Hamlet's melancholy and -sullen looks, and evidently glances at his black suit.

67 Not so, my lord—it is nothing of the kind, my lord I am sun—Hamlet takes Claudius in the literal sense, and replies that he is too much in the sun rather than being enveloped in the clouds. He means that he is too much in the sun-shine of court, scoffing at the king's intention to make much of him.

N B There is a play on *sun son*, as Claudius is fusing over him as a son. There may be another meaning too, for the proverbial expression—"Out of God's blessing into the warm sun," which means to be out of house and home—so a subtle allusion to Hamlet's loss of the throne.

68 Cast . . . off—discard your black suit.

69 Let thine eye . . . Denmark—look upon the King of Denmark with a friendly eye; take kindly to the King of Denmark.

70 Veiled lids—downward cast eyes.

71 Seek for . . . dust—mourn your father who is no more than dust now.

Thou die—you know that death must come, and all who are born, must die. The Queen is very tactless, and the way she speaks seems to show that the death of Hamlet's father is of no matter to her (for she is again the queen, and she has husband too).

72 Nature—life Passing . . . eternity—the idea being that death is the gateway to eternal life.

74 Ay common—what else can Hamlet say—and he agrees with his mother, but the rebuke which is conveyed in this seeming assent, is lost upon her.

75 Why seems . . . thee—A more blundering remark. The queen's words seem to imply that Hamlet makes a show of his grief for his father or at least why Hamlet makes so much of his grief for his father. The word 'seems' grates on Hamlet's ears, and he bursts into a protest.

76 Seems . . . Is—there is no *seeming* with me, madam, it is a reality (the grief for my father), and not a demonstration.

78 Customary black—the black garment which is worn in mourning.

79 Windy suspiration—long drawn sighs. Forced breath—two ideas are combined—(1) painfully drawn, and (2) insincere.

80. The fruitful river . . . eye—the blood of tears in the eyes The exaggeration in speech emphasizes the insincerity of grief, which makes a great show. N. B. Hamlet might also remind his mother of the role she played on his father's death : see below—

She follow'd my poor father's body,  
Like Niobe, all tears.

81 Th dejected . . . visage—the sad, woe-begone look of his face.

82. Forms—formalities Moods .. grief—the shifting phases and manifestations of grief.

83. That . . . truly—that can really indicate me. These . . . seems—the manifestations of grief are all seeming.

84 They actions .. play—these manifestations of grief are a role that a man might play

85 But I have . . . show—the grief within me is something, which cannot be shown by outward actions—it is beyond show.

86. These ... woe—all that you see outside, or can be shown is but the dress or garment of grief—and should not be identified with grief itself. Trappings ... woe—such as black garments which cannot indicate anything of grief, is unshowable

87—89 'Tis sweet . . . father—it is very praiseworthy of you as son, Hamlet to pay these respects to the memory of your father Claudius attempts to make up for the tactless blunder of the queen, and he is good at the art of cajolery.

90 Survivor—the surviving son.

90—92. Bound . . . sorrow—owes to himself as son to mourn (formally), the death of his father for a definite period The cold, unfeeling sermon of Claudius on the duty of a son to his father nauseates Hamlet, but Hamlet has to keep quiet Persever—persevere, persist

93. Obstinate condolment—stubborn, perpetual mourning.

94. Impious stubbornness—obstinacy in grief which is an offence against God. 'Tis unmanly grief—a grief that shows a relaxed will and feeble reason and judgment.

95 It shows . . . heaven—such persistent grief shows a perverseness of will (which God will punish).



96 A heart unfortified—feeling little under control A mind impatient—a mind unsubmissive to the will of God

97. An understanding .. unschoo'd—undeveloped and undisciplined intellect.

98. What common—when we know that death is inevitable.

99. As any . . . sense—the most obvious thing Vulgar—common.

100—101. Why should we . . . heart—why should we nurse such grief (incidental to the death of a father) in a sort of rebellion to the will of God? 'Tis heaven—it is an offence against God

102 A fault .. nature—in persisting in our grief for the dead, we fail in our duty to the dead as well as in our duty to the living.

103. To reason most absurd—i. e. any thing most unreasonable to a man of sense.

104 Still—always.

105. Corse—corpse, a dead body.

106. "This must be so"—it is inevitable. Throw to earth—discard

107. Unprevailing woe—fruitless grief.

108 Let note—let the world observe.

109. You . . . throne—you are my next successor to the throne. N B. The crown of Denmark is elective The point is that Hamlet's mother by marrying Claudius has kept her son out of the throne which should have been his by right as well as by election. The guilty conscience of Claudius makes him so anxious to placate Hamlet.

110—112. And with no less nobility .. . you—The construction is involved Perhaps Claudius was going to say, "with no less nobility am I disposed towards you" The obscurity may be removed, if we take impart' with the object 'love' implied, then the meaning will be . "with the same sentiment of great and unselfish love that the dearest father bears his son, I offer it to you" For your intent—as your intention.

113 School—university. Wittenberg—the university was founded in 1502 The university is mentioned in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Wittenberg stands on the Elbe, 50 miles south of Berlin.

114. Retrograde to our desire—opposed to our. 'Retrograde' is an astrological term, used of planets when they were moving away from the earth, at which they were supposed to be hostile to human designs

115. Bend . . . . . remain—persuade to stage in Denmark.

116. In the cheer . . . . . eye—within our sight so as to give us pleasure and comfort. N B. Claudius unconsciously echoes, the sense of Hamlet's words—"I am too much 't' the sun. Claudius intends Hamlet to bask in the sunshine of his royal favour.

118. Let not . . . prayers—do not disappoint your mother when she entreats you to stay

120 I shall .. madam—It is suggested by one critic that the object of Claudius is to keep Hamlet a prisoner in Denmark and watch him. The queen is not likely to be a party to such a design.

122 Be as ourselves . . . Denmark—Take your place here as the first courtier, cousin and son to the king Claudius might believe that he could flatter and cajole Hamlet into submission

123. Unforced—voluntary. Accord—assent.

124 Sits heart—pleases me very much. The king turns with a smile to Hamlet, but it is a smile that covers his malice. In grace whereof—in honour of which.

125 Jocund ... .. to day—merry health drinking in Denmark

126 Cannon—an anachronism.

127 Rouse—revelry. Bruit—echo.

128. Re speaking—reverberating. Earthly thunder—cannon

125—128 No Jocund health . . . thunder—a touch of local colour N B Brandes quotes from the note book of "Maister William Segar, Garter king at Armes," under date July 14, 1603 "That afternoon the king (& c. of Denmark) went aboard the English ship, and had a banquet (banquet), prepared for him upon the upper decks which were hung with an awning of cloths of tissue; every health reported six, eight or ten shot of ordnance, so that, during the king's abode the ship discharged 150 shot . . . . It would make a man sick to hear of their drunken health, use bath brought

it into fashion, and fashion made it a habit, which ill beseems our nation to imitate."

129. This too too solid flesh . . . melt—N B This soliloquy reveals the core of Hamlet's moral tension, disillusion and cynicism. What is going on in his mind, needs to be retrospectively explained. His mother's hasty marriage is the main burden of this soliloquy, and its full implications are rarely grasped. Why the shock should have been so great to Hamlet is the whole crux of the matter. He idolized his father, and then again he was so loving and devoted to his mother. It was unimaginable to him that his mother should have so soon transferred her affection to his uncle who was in every respect so inferior to her first husband. It shakes his moral being to its very depth and shatters his faith in all mankind, to the fine fibre of his soul this seems to be a total disintegration of the ethical substance of life. Solid flesh—i. e. the material body. J. D. Wilson prefers the Quarto reading—"sullied flesh." He writes, "sullied flesh is the key to the soliloquy and tells us that Hamlet is thinking of the 'kindless' incestuous marriage as a personal defilement. Further, "sullied" fits the immediate context as 'solid' does not. There is something absurd in associating 'solid flesh' with 'melt' and 'thaw'. This interpretation certainly brings out the moral crisis in Hamlet."

130. Thaw . . . itself—dissolve

131—132 Or that the Everlasting . . . self slaughter—  
if God had not forbidden suicide. N B The idea of suicide seems to knock at his mind. The only way out from the moral defilement of his soul and flesh by his mother's incestuous marriage suggests the idea of suicide to him but as a sane and rational being he dismisses it from his mind. Later in another soliloquy he is to contemplate it seriously.

133—134. How weary, stale . . . world—Hamlet's cynicism is expressed in these lines. He is just fed up, he cannot take interest in anything in the world. And it is all the result of the loathing produced by his mother's incestuous marriage, life seems to have lost all meaning or purpose to him. N B It should be remembered that cynicism was no part of Hamlet's nature. We may quote his speech in II. ii: "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason!

how infinite in faculties ! in form and moving how express and admirable ! in action how like an angel ! in apprehension how like a god ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals !" And this speech if anything, shows that Hamlet had a perception of the beauty of things around him, that he was keenly sensitive to beauty, material and intellectual. What a change must have taken place in him.

135. 'Tis . . . garden—He can compare the world to a garden overgrown with weeds. The world in which he is living is steeped in vice and corruption. The immediate problem to him is the state of Denmark ; again and again in pain and shade he refers to the foul atmosphere of the court, the king's drunkenness and teachery, and his own mother's outrageous conduct, all spring from rottenness somewhere.

136. That . . . seed—that runs wild. Rank—(1) luxuriant in growth ; (2) evil-smelling.

137. Merrily—absolutely. That . . . this—that his mother should fall from her loyalty to the memory of her dead father !

138. But two . . . two—i. e. while his father is less than two months dead.

139. That was—the king that was his father. To this—compared to the one who now sits on the throne—his uncle.

140. Hyperion—one of the Titans, and father of Helios the sun god, with whom he is frequently consequently confounded. The sun god is meant here. Hyperion to a *satyr*—his father was Hyperion, and his uncle a satyr, a goat-like sylvan deity.)

140. Beteem—allow.

140—141. That he might not . . . roughly—Hamlet remembered the tender devotion of his father to his mother.

143. Must I remember—his memory of what was—his father's love and devotion to his mother while he was, as contrasted with what he sees now—his mother's defection, causes pang to him.

143—145. Why, she would hang . . . on—his mother would cling to his father, as if the more she had of his love, the more she yearned for it. The words seem to imply amorousness of the mother. Appetite—sex desire. Within

a month—Hamlet says above two months; now it is one month. It is the exaggeration of grief.

146 Let me out—if it is too painful for him to recall the event

Frailty . woman—he accuses all women to be frail, inconstant creatures. His mother's action has shaken his faith in all woman kind. His own conduct to Ophelia later, which may seem unaccountable to some, should be explained in the light of his painful disillusion.

148 Follow'd . body—s. e attended the funeral of my father.

149 Niobe—the wife of Amphion, King of Thebes. All her children—seven sons and seven daughters, were killed by the arrows of Apollo and Diana, because she had boasted of their beauty. Niobe, all tears—the picture of a bereaved, mother. Why she, even she—if she was all tears, like Niobe, when following his poor father's body to the grave, it cannot be imagined that she could have so soon forgotten her grief, and married his uncle, a fellow so worthless compared to his father.

150 Discourse of reason—faculty of reasoning.

152 But no more father—Hamlet emphasizes this—the absolutely inferiority of his uncle to his father—again and again. There is a phase of depravity in his mother's conduct. And he brings it home to his mother in his interview with her (iii iv), when he puts the portraits of the two before her and points out the difference, and expresses wonder that she should have chosen to marry this fellow after she had known honourable love—and he meant that it could not be anything else than perversity of will and blood.

153. Hercules—mythical Greek hero, noted for his 12 labours. Hamlet is thinking of the physical grace and manly bearing of his father.

154 Unrighteous tears—tears which were an expression of insincere grief. "Hamlet cannot possibly mean that the tears were not due to his father. Perhaps he thinks that, as his mother married again so quickly, her tears were not the expression of genuine grief"—Goggin

155 Flushing—redness, the idea being that before her tears had had time to redden her eyes. Goggin explains it as filling with water. Galled—hurt.

157. It is not . . . good—N. B. Hamlet's delicate sensibilities seem to have made things worse for him. He thinks that the evil example set by his mother, can only spread corruption in the state. Apart from his sense of personal defilement, caused by his mother's action, it is now viewed in its larger relation. It will breed worse evil too.

158. But break . . . Tongue—Hamlet cannot tell anybody else of his mother's sin, and relieve his heart. He must keep himself tortured and let his heart be preyed upon by secret misery. He is driven into isolation, which makes things so incomparably bad for him.

159. I am . . . well—conventional greeting of unrecognized intruders. Hamlet then looks up and recognizes Horatio.

160. Or . . . myself—if I am not mistaken.

162. My good friend—let 'friend' be substituted for 'servant'. I'll change . . . you—"no talk of service"! The only name between us is "friend"—J. D. Wilson,

163. What . . . Wittenberg—why have you left Wittenberg and what are you doing here?

168. A truant disposition—Horatio takes Hamlet's words lightly and answers that he has run away from school.

169. I would not . . . so—I would not like your enemy say so.

170. Nor shall . . . violence—nor shall I let my ear be so abused,

171—72. To make it . . . yourself—as to believe anything that you say against yourself. Note that Hamlet thinks highly of Horatio.

173. But what . . . Elsinore—Hamlet rather insists on knowing what brings Horatio to Elsinore from Wittenberg.

174. We'll teach . . . depart—drunkenness of the king and his court is a subject which Hamlet cannot get over. Later he complains about it, and deploras it.

176. I pray thee . . . me—he should better say that the has come to his mother's wedding. Hamlet is hurt by Horatio's reply. He should have told the brutal truth that he had come to attend his uncle's wedding with his coronation.

177. I think . . . wedding—Hamlet walks apart with Horatio, leaving Marcellus and Bernardo behind. Otherwise

such confidence between the two friends would have been indiscreet.

179 Thrift . Horatio—Hamlet does not conceal his disgust at his mother's hasty marriage over which he has been brooding a few moments ago. He means that it was a measure of economy that the pastry prepared for the funeral was used up for the wedding. There is the custom of providing a cold entertainment for the mourners at a funeral. N. B. Scott, in his *Bride of Lammer moor*, tells us of the old custom of "funeral baked meats" being kept up in Scotland till recent period.

180 Did tables—were served out to the wedding guests. Coldly—(1) not served hot, (2) cold with reference to the late funeral.

181. Dearest foe—deadliest enemy. 'Dear' is used of whatever touches us nearly either in love or hate, joy or sorrow.

182. Or ever—before.

183. I see my father—I see my father in my mental vision.

185. I saw him once—Horatio is about to refer to some particular occasion when he had seen Hamlet's father, but Hamlet interrupts him.

186 He was a man . all—Hamlet means that his father was an ideal and perfect man. It expresses not only his veneration for his father, but his admiration of all that is best and noblest in man.

187. I shall . again—I cannot find one matching him among men.

191 Season—moderate. Admiration—amazement.

192. Attent—attentive.

193 Upon gentlemen—these gentlemen here confirming my statement.

194 This marvel—this wonderful phenomenon. For God's sake . hear—Hamlet is too anxious to hear. Though he does not openly state it, there is a suspicion in his mind about the circumstances of his father's death.

197. In the dead night—in the depth of midnight when all nature seems to be dead and void.

199. At point—in all point Cap a pe—from head to foot.

200. With solemn march—with stately bearing and steps.

201. Thrice—a mystic number.

202. Oppress'd .. eyes—eyes with the haunting looks of fear.

203 Truncheon's length—distance of his marshall's baton, Distill'd—congealed.

204. Almost ... fear—the act of fear was to reduce them to a pulpy mass, leaving in them no will or power of action.

205. In dreadful secrecy—in confidence into which they were driven by their fear. Impart—communicate.

208. As they . . . deliver d—according to their report

208—209 Both thing—both in regard to the point of time and description of the figure. Each word good—each word being confirmed.

211. These hands . . . like—these hands of mine are not more like each other than your father and the apparition.

215—216. Did .. motion—made as if to speak.

217—19. But even then . sight—"Another poet, according to custom, would," as Warton says "have suffered his ghost tamely to vanish, contriving this start, which is like a start of guilt; to say nothing of the aggravation of the future suspense occasioned by this preparation to speak, and to impart some mysterious secret. Less would have been expected if nothing had been promised" 'Tis very strange—Hamlet is rather cautious, and suppresses his own personal feelings at this narration. So it seems to be a very mild comment.

220. As I do live . . . true—Horatio swears to its absolute truth. He knows that Hamlet must be as incredulous as he was at first. So he protests vigorously.

221. Writ . . . duty—enjoined by our duty

223. This troubles you—An ambiguous comment. It is true that Hamlet has been very much upset by this news, but he must make more sure.

225 Arm'd . . . say—do you say that it came armed? Hamlet wants to have all the details confirmed. He has been also thinking intensely all the time

228 Then . . . face—if the figure had been armed from head to foot, Horatio could not have seen the face. And



if Horatio could not have seen the face, how could he be sure that it was his father's ghost? Hamlet however perturbed, keeps his reason fully awake. Beaver—the movable part of a helmet

231 A countenance                      anger—Horatio must have carefully observed the ghost. While his companions were "distill'd almost to jelly with the act of fear," he kept his wits about him, and was able to watch the ghost in detail. Why did the countenance express more of sorrow than anger? The ghost still loved his faithless queen, and when he visits Hamlet later he warns Hamlet against being rude or violent to his mother. Pale or red—"pale" will express sorrow, and 'red' will express anger. Hamlet puts Horatio through a cross examination.

234 Most constantly—i.e. invariably.

237 While one                      hundred—so long as one could count a hundred not too quickly.

239. Grizzled—with a sprinkling of grey hairs.

241. A sable silver'd—black and grey mixed together.

242. Walk again—a spirit is said to walk when it comes out of the grave

I warrant—I am sure.

243 If it assume. — person—N.B. Hamlet's incredulity has not yet been removed. The spirit may be a devil. "The 'philosopher' Horatio and the simple soldier-man Marcellus stand respectively for the sceptical and traditional interpretations. But Hamlet the student of Wittenberg, is chiefly swayed by Protestant prepossessions"—J.D. Wilson

244-245 Hell itself . . . peace—hell open its mouth and forced me to speak.

246 Concealed the sight—kept the knowledge of this apparition from others.

247. Let . . . still—keep it a secret

248 Hap—happen

249 Give . . . tongue—apply your mind and perception to it, but do not speak of it.

250 Requite—reward

252. Our . . . honour—we are at your service.

253 Your loves                      you—let it be your friendship, and not your 'duty' or service, as I offer my friendship to you

254 My father's spirit .. .... well—when my father's spirit walks in arms there must be something seriously wrong.

255 I doubt ... .. play—the suspicion of some plot involving his father's death, crosses his mind. Would . . . . come—he wishes to have his doubt resolved.

256 Sit still—be patient. Foul deeds .. . rise—crime cannot be buried.

257. Though .. . . eyes—whatever attempts may be made to conceal crimes, they will reveal themselves.

### SCENE III.

Analysis: Laertes takes leave of Ophelia before leaving for France. He particularly warns her against Hamlet's advances. Hamlet's love is but a fancy of the moment a violet that blooms too early and decay as soon. Ophelia must not take it seriously. She ought to remember, as Laertes warns her, that Hamlet is not free in his choice, being subject to the will of the King. All that he means is that Ophelia should not reject Hamlet's love off hand, but safe guard her virtue. Ophelia, like a good girl, is quite willing to follow her brother's advice, but she is a bit curious to know whether her brother is not like those ungracious pastors, who are very free with their good counsel, but themselves lead a dissolute life.

Polonius steps in now. He is surprised to see Laertes still loitering about. He should have embarked by now, for the wind is favourable, and he is being waited for. He blesses him a second time, and seasons his blessing with a few precepts: Laertes should keep his thoughts to himself, nor execute any immature thought, he should be familiar, but should not make himself too cheap, he should attach his friends to himself by strong bond after having tested their sincerity, he should not welcome every companion or admit him to terms of intimacy, he should keep out a quarrel, but once in he should acquit himself in a manly spirit; he should listen to every one, but offer his advice to none, he should wear as expensive clothes as his means permit, he should neither be a borrower nor a lender, but above all he should be true to himself. Laertes now departs, taking leave of his father and sister.

Polonius then asks Ophelia what Laertes has been talking to her. He too warns, Ophelia against Hamlet. Ophelia tells him that lately Hamlet has been courting her in honourable affection. Polonius sniffs at the word 'affection' and calls her a green girl, unsifted in such perilous circumstances. Polonius advises her not to trust Hamlet's love, when she says that he has addressed love to her in a honourable fashion. She is bidden to give less of time to Hamlet henceforth, nor to make herself too cheap. Ophelia promises to obey her father.

**Critical Note:** Coleridge writes, "This scene must be regarded as one of Shakespeare's lyric movements in the play, and the skill with which it is interwoven with the dramatic parts is peculiarly an excellence of our poet. You experience the sensation of a pause without the sense of a stop."

Coleridge misses a fundamental point. There is nothing of *lyricism* in this picture of the dreary domestic life that is revealed. What we perceive here is the orphaned loveliness of Ophelia which, receiving no sympathy either from father or brother, gives them an opportunity to sermonize her and bully her. Ophelia is too mild and gentle; perhaps her want of personality renders her an easy prey to the intrigue of her father later and causes her to forget Hamlet's esteem. The pathos of Ophelia's position in this scene should come to the reader's mind. Her domestic life reveals the tyranny of her father, and her consequent self repression. She has little to do with the movement of the play, while she is used as a pawn by her father, and she fatally ends in madness.

#### NGTES

1 My necessities                      embark'd—all my baggage has been carried to the ship

2 As the winds                      benefit—these were the days of sailing ships

3, Convey                      assistant—i.e. the means of conveyance is helpful Do not sleep—do not be lazy.

4. Let                      you—write to me

5 For Hamlet—as for Hamlet The trifling .. favour—what little attention you receive from him Laertes means that Hamlet's addresses should not be taken seriously.

6. *Fashion*—just the way with a young man. *Laertes* means that Hamlet is merely flirting with her, and has no serious intention. *A toy in blood*—a mere spurt of passion. In Elizabethan English, *Toy* means trifle, something of no value.

7. *A violet . . . . nature*—the youthful passion which has little substance of its own ("a toy in blood") is compared to a violet in the early spring. *Primy nature*—nature in its early spring.

8. *Forward*—too quick to bloom. *Not permanent*—soon fading away.

9. *The perfume . . . minute*—that may emit fragrance and give pleasure for a minute. *No more . . . so*—It seems to be a rude awakening to Ophelia to be told that Hamlet's love is no more lasting than a violet that blooms early in the spring and fades away quickly.

11—12. *For nature . . . bulk*—i. e. the growth of a man is not merely a physical growth. *Crescent*—growing. *In thews and bulk*—in muscles and bodily proportion. *Temple*—the body, compare "Ye are the temple of the living God—" 2. *Corinthians*, VI. 11.

13. *The inward service*—"Having used the word 'temple', Shakespeare characteristically goes on to think of 'service' with its secondary meaning of 'allegiance'—*J. D. Wilson*.

11—14. *For nature . . . withal*—as we grow physically, our mind grows with it.

15—16. *And now no self . . . will*—now he may have no dishonourable motive to tarnish his love. *Cantel*—deceit. *Beamirch*—stain.

17. *His greatness weighs*—his great position being taken into consideration. *His will . . . . own*—he is not free to make his own choice.

18. *For he himself . . . birth*—his royal birth limits his freedom.

19. *Unvalued persons*—persons of insignificant position.

20. *Carve for himself*—make his own choice.

20—21. *For on his choice . . . . state*—the safety and well-being of the kingdom are closely connected with his choice of a bride, therefore he cannot be given any freedom in this matter.

22. *Circumscribed*—limited.

23—24—Unto the voice . . . head—i. e. to the view and consent of the state which he will rule.

25 It fits . . . it—it will be sensible for you to believe it to the extent.

26—27 As he deed—that he can prove it in particular instances, subject to his place in the state. Gives . . . deed—put his words into action.

27—28 Which wthai—the doing of what he says cannot extend beyond the limits of the king's approval. Laertes means that Hamlet however he may profess love to Ophelia, cannot act independently of the will of the king of Denmark.

29 Then weigh . . . sustain—these you should consider the risk to your virtue in listening to his pleading of love.

30 Credent—credulous List—listen to His songs—his eloquent vows of love Compare what Ophelia later says (III. i.)

And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,  
That suck'd the *honey of his music* vows

31. Lose your heart—give your affection to him

33. Keep . . . affection—"do not advance so far as your affection would lead you"—Johnson

34 Out . . . desire—far away from the risk of passionate desire.

35. Chariest—most cautious Prodigal—free and careless.

36. If she . . . moon—if she expresses her beauty to the light of the moon Perhaps Laertes desires her to shut herself in a convent so that the light of the sun or moon may not visit her.

37. Virtue . . . stroke—the virtuous person is not immune from slander.

38. Canker—the canker worm Galls . . . spring—eats into the buds of the spring.

39. Buttons—buds. Disclosed—unfolded.

40. In the morn—youth is compared to early morning when the air was supposed to be unwholesome.

41. Contagious—pestilential. Blastments—blighting influences. Imminent—impending.

42. Best safety . . . . fear—you can keep yourself safe by being afraid of losing your virtue and so by constantly guarding it,

43. Youth . . . . near—in youth itself is the impulse to break away from moral restraints, not to speak of temptations that may beset it.

44. I shall . . . . keep—I shall follow your counsel.

45. As watchman . . . heart—as a guide to my feelings

46. Ungracious—graceless Pastors—priests.

47. Show . . . . heaven—point out to me the hard path to righteousness.

48. Puff'd—bloated (as the result of drinking). Reckless—indifferent to moral values Libertine—a dissolute person

49. Primrose . . . dalliance—a life of self indulgence. Compare. "the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire"—*Macbeth* l. 11. Recks not—does not pay heed to. Rede—counsel.

43—49. But, good my brother . . . . rede—*Expl.* Laertes advises his sister, Ophelia, to keep strict to the path of virtue, however hard it may be Ophelia has doubts whether her brother is following the same principle that he has been preaching to her. She is aware that there are priests who give good advice, but follow none in their own life.' To others they will recommend a life of self-indulgence. Now she is afraid that her brother may be of the same type. Fear me not—Laertes silences her doubt with these words, meaning that Ophelia need not worry about him, that he can take care of himself.

52. A double blessing.... . . grace—there is another chance of receiving a blessing from you, and it is an additional favour Grace—theological issue of favour being a free gift of God.

53. Occasion . . . . .leave—occasion favours a second leave taking

54. Yet here Laertes—you are still lingering'. Aboard—get on board ship at once.

55. The wind . . . sail—the wind is favourable.

56. Stay'd for—waited for.

57. Precepts—maxims.

57—58. And these few precepts . . . . character—carry these few maxims in your memory. Polonius is a garru-

lous old man, who is a always fond of giving advice. He cannot miss this opportunity though he urges his son to get abroad quickly, for no time is to be lost, Give . . . tongue—keep your thoughts to yourself, and do not make these public to others.

59 Unproportion'd—immature. Nor any unproportion'd . . . —act—nor should you put into action any immature thought.

61 Their adoption tried—their sincerity having been tested

62 Grapple . . . steel—bind them to yourself with the strongest ties of friendship. Hoops of steel—rings put round a cast

63 But . . . entertainment—do not make your hand hard by shaking every man by the hand Entertainment—greeting

64. New-hatch'd—use of a friend casually picked up. Unpledged—the same metaphor of a bird not yet furnished with wings.

64—65 Beware . . . quarrel—he careful not to get into a quarrel Being in—once you have entered into a quarrel

66. Bear t . . . thee—conduct yourself in a fearless spirit so that your opponents may be careful to avoid you in the future

67. Give . . . ear—listen to what everyone says But few thy voice—do not give everybody your advice

68 Censure—judgement A neutral sense in Shakespeare Reserve judgement—do not give your own view freely.

69. Costly . . . buy—let your clothes be as expensive as your means permit

70 But . . . fancy—let not your clothes be gaudy. Gaudy—showy.

71 For the apparel . . . man—for a man is often known by his dress

73 Are . . . generous—are very careful or finical about their clothes and spare no expense Chief in that—t a very particular about dress

75 For loan . . . . . friend—for you give a loan to a friend, you lose both your money and your friend

76 And borrowing. . husbandry—if you start borrowing, you end by mis-managing your affairs you get into a mess Husbandry—thrift.

77. To thine . . . true—this advice given by Polonius seems to be useless, for Polonius plays the game of bluffing and double dealing.

79 Thou canst . . . man—Polonius cannot really mean this He does not advice his son to be sincere in his dealings with others. So there is no meaning in telling him to be true to himself, or not to be false to others.

80. Season this—bring this advice to ripeness.

82 The time. . . you—you must make haste. Tend—wait on you.

84—85. It is in my memory . . . it—I shall remember it all right and you alone know what it means to me—it is all a matter between you and me.

89. Well belthought—now it reminds you.

90. Of late—lately.

91. Given . . . you—seen you privately.

92. Have . . . bounteous—have freely admitted him to your presence.

93. So 'tis . . . me—so I have been informed.

94. In . . . caution—as a warning.

95—96 You do not . . . honour—you hardly realize your own position as my daughter and in respect to your virtue.

97. What . . . you—what is going on between you and Hamlet? The father bullies the daughter.

98 Tenders—offers

100 Affection—Polonius laughs at the idea of 'affection'. With his own depraved mind, delving in court intrigue, he cannot trust purity of sentiment. Green—inexperienced.

101. Unsifted . . . circumstance—never having had any experience of the risk you are running. Unsifted—untested

103 I do not . . . think—hesitation to believe Hamlet's sincerity of love is first suggested to her by her brother, and is confirmed by her father.

104 Think . . . baby—a hint that she should blindly follow his advice, since as she is no more than a baby in



worldly experience, she cannot take any responsibility for herself.

103. You have ta'en . . . pay—you have received these offers as sincere expressions of his love.

106. While . . . sterling—which are not genuine like a current coin.

Tender . . . dearly—have a greater care of yourself; do not make yourself so cheap.

107. Crack the wind—the metaphor of a spent runner who has lost his wind. Polonius has been playing with the word 'tender,' and is afraid that he has exhausted all its possibilities. In the next line he compares it to a hare, chased by dogs.

108. Tender me a fool—(1) make me appear a fool to the world, (2) present me with a baby. Polonius believes in his wit, and sometimes in tracking down a word or phrase, he will not mind being coarse or vulgar.

109. Importuned—courted.

110. In honourable fashion—Ophelia is inclined to believe that Hamlet could have no dishonourable intention towards her, and if she had strength of character or personality, she could have repudiated the suggestions of her brother.

111. Fashion . . . it—indeed, it is a 'fashion' with him. Polonius echoes his son's

"Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood."

He too means that Hamlet is just flirting with her. He poisons his daughter's mind with evil suggestions. Go to—a cry of protest or impatience.

112. And hath . . . speech—and has supported his speech in action.

123. Holy . . . heaven—sacred vows of love.

114. Springes . . . woodcocks—snarcs to catch the woodcocks. The woodcock was proverbially a foolish bird. Ophelia must be as foolish as a woodcock to believe Hamlet's vows of love.

115. When the blood burns—when the passion is excited.

115—116. How prodigal . . . .. vows—how free is the tongue with vows when it is moved by passion. Prodigal—lavishly. Blazes—flashes of love.

117. Giving .... .. heat—Polonius means that these ex-

pressions of love are all froth, and have no substance. Extinct in both—dying out in its effervescence.

118. Even . . . promise—in their very bloom

119. You must . . . fire—you must not mistake the *blazes* for *fire* i. e. the mere gleam or flash of passion for passion itself

114—119. Ay, *springes* . . . fire—Polonius wants to persuade his daughter to believe that Hamlet is not serious in his profession of love. If she believes it, she must be as simple and foolish as a woodcock. Polonius also implies that Hamlet has laid a snare to catch her simple soul. He further says that a man, when prompted by passion as distinguished from true, lasting love, can be very free with vows; so Ophelia is not to believe Hamlet's vows of love. The vows are just the *blazes* or outbreaks of momentary passion, but have nothing to do with the real passion of love. The vows can mean no more than such *blazes*; they can have no substance, like *blazes* they flare up and go out. In any case Ophelia, as her father is determined, should not believe Hamlet's vows of love.

120. Be . . . presence—do not be so free as to see Hamlet; be careful to deny your presence to Hamlet.

121. Set your . . . rate—do not make your presence so cheap to Hamlet. Polonius is talking in a sarcastic tone. Entertainments—interviews

122. A command to parley—i. e. a demand from Hamlet to see you and have a talk with you. For Lord Hamlet—as for Lord Hamlet.

123. Believe . . . him—trust at least what I tell you of him.

124—124. With a larger . . . you—he will have much more freedom than you can have. In few—briefly.

126. Brokers—agents (or rather panders).

127. Not . . . show—i. e. being otherwise than they appear. Polonius means Hamlet's vows of love are intended, as Polonius implies, to seduce Ophelia. Dye—colour. Investments—clothes. The vows of Hamlet are not to be judged by their outward form, Ophelia must not trust appearances.

128. Implorators—solicitors. Unholy suits—illicit love

129. Breathing . . . bonds—having all the appearance of sacred and inviolable oaths.

130. Beguile—tempt.

126-130 For they are brokers . . . . beguile—Polonius insinuates that Hamlet's vows of love are just corrupters of virtue. He paints Hamlet as a seducer. This is for all—this is once for all

131 In plain terms—to be plain with you.

132. Slander—misuse.

133. Look ..... you—so it is a positive command to the daughter.

#### SCENE IV

*Analysis.* The scene is the platform before the castle where Horatio and Marcellus are waiting for the ghost to appear. It is a bitterly cold night, and it is very near twelve. The sound of trumpet and the salvoes of guns announce that the king is indulging in his carouse. Hamlet is rather unhappy over it because it makes the Danes so spoken ill of by other nations, and it neutralizes all their virtues.

The ghost appears the next moment. Hamlet turns to address the ghost because he sees that it comes in the shape of his father. He is not sure that it is not an evil spirit. In any case he must risk talking to the ghost. He addresses the ghost as king, father, royal Dane. He begs the ghost to tell him why he has left his grave and what his purpose is in revisiting the earth. The ghost beckons Hamlet.

Both Horatio and Marcellus request Hamlet not to go. But he has now grown desperate and sets no value on his life, and as for his soul, he believes that the ghost can do no harm to it. Again the ghost beckons Hamlet. Horatio is very much concerned because he thinks that the ghost might tempt Hamlet on to the brink of a river, or to the summit of a hill, overhanging the sea, and then assume some dreadful shape, which might deprive Hamlet of reason—and will not let his friend go. The ghost beckons again. Hamlet tears himself away from Horatio and Marcellus who hold him, and follows the ghost. They follow him behind.

*Critical Note* It opens as a scene of tense expectation, and recalls the misery and terror of the opening scene. A temporary diversion is created by Hamlet's comment on the vice of drinking so prevalent among the Danes, making them

traduced by other nations. Then the ghost appears in his usual hour. Hamlet seems to have been deeply shaken by the sight of his father's ghost, about which there can be no mistake. He is taut in every nerve and fibre, and when the ghost beckons him, he goes forward, as if to meet his doom. His reason is not yet paralysed. For a moment the thought crosses his mind that an evil spirit might have taken the likeness of his father. But the lurking suspicion of foul play in his mind drives him desperate—and perhaps here he might get the clue, and so he runs forward, tearing himself away from Horatio and Marcellus.

Schucking best analyses what is passing in Hamlet's mind at the moment. "He, the sceptical, unexpectedly gives vent to an adjuration that is like a cry for help or prayer for protection: 'angels and ministers of grace defend us!' The same thing happens later on when the ghost enters his mother's room. When the stoical Horatio sees the ghost for the second time on the battlements, it has clearly lost a good deal of its terror for him, Hamlet, however, expresses his horror in almost the same words as before 'Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings, you heavenly guards!' On both occasions it seemed as though a sudden weakness has made a believer of him again; but only for a moment for in Hamlet reason always retains a certain ascendancy and even at times of great spiritual stress he does not wholly lose his scepticism. In spite of excitement he therefore attempts to give the words, with which he next addresses the ghost a certain objectivity. What is the meaning of this visitation? Yet his heart is not in these questionings, he feels drawn towards his father's spirit and turns to him with fervour, The ghost must speak; nothing on the earth is so important as that! And yet Hamlet cannot help expressing the horror that has seized him. By temperament he is too susceptible to the macabre to forget the risen corpse in the ghost, and his hyper-sensitive-ness sees in it something repulsive, that insults the beauty and stillness of the night. But as every individual experience promptly leads him to generalize, this reminds him what helpless play things men are in the hands of higher powers."

#### NOTES.

1. The air . . . shred—the air is very sharp and chilly.

2. Eager—sharp.
- 3 It lacks of twelve—it is a little short of twelve.
- 5 Season—he definite period
6. Held .. walk—had the habit of coming out of the grave
- 8 Wake—hold his revel Rouse—drinking bout.
- 9 Wassail—revelry Swaggering—strutting (refer to the gait) Up spring reels—the up-spring is a kind of wild dance with which old German merry makings were concluded. 'Reels' is a verb here
- 10 Drains down—quaffs Rhenish wine
- 11 Bray out—proclaim
12. The triumph of his pledge—celebration of the carousal
- 14 Though . here—though I am an inhabitant of this place
- 15 To the manner born—brought up on this custom.
- 15 16 It is a custom . . . observance—I should prefer this custom being abandoned rather than being observed.
17. Heavy headed revel—drinking that fuddles one's brains.
- 18 Traduced—calumniated. Tax'd—censured. Of other nations—by other nations
- 19 Clip—call. Swinish pharse—by calling us swine.
- 20 Soil our addition—give us a bad name.
- 21 Perform'd at height—accomplished in all its glory
- 22 The pith . . . attribute—the substance of all praise or credit
- 24 Vicious mole of nature—natural defect
- 25 In their birth . . guilty—i. e. a defect inherited for which they cannot be held responsible
- 25 Since nature . . origin—because man can have no choice in the matter of birth.
- 27 By the o'ergrowth complexion—by the excess of some trait of character Complexion—A reference to the four humours—blood, phlegm, choler, melancholy—the relative proportion of which was supposed to determine a man's character.
28. Oft breaking down . reason—i. e. exceeding—the limits of reason and moderation. Pales—enclosure.
- 29-30 Some habit . manners—i. e. a habit that reacts too much upon pleasing manners. 'To 'o'er leaven' is to have too much of a good thing The habit spoken of, there-

fore, is one that makes pleasing manners appear excessive, or that allows men to place a sinister interpretation on what is nothing but personal charm. The whole passage, *ll*, 27-30, is applicable to Hamlet himself, but the judicious in an audience of that time would, I think, have detected a reference to the popularity of the late Earl of Essex, had the lines been "spoken"—*J. D. Wilson*

31. The stamp of one defect—*i. e.* The marked blemish.

32. King star—having received the defect from Nature as a servant gets a distinctive suit of clothes from his master, or from the influence of the star in the ascendant at his birth. The defect may be either one inherited, or one accidental—therefore due to the influence of a star.

33. Their virtues—whatever their virtues may be. Be . . . grace—even if they are absolutely free from any blemish.

34. As infinite . . . undergo—as boundless as human virtues may be

35. General censure—public opinion or judgement

Take corruption—*i. e.* be tainted by his single defect, natural or accidental.

36 38. The dram of eale . . . scandal—the general sense seems to be a small defect neutralizes the whole of a noble conduct. The different interpretations are given below :—

(1) A draw or decoction of eels—"The eel being killed and dressed in wine, whatsoever chanceth to drink of that wine so used shall ever forward loathe wine"

(2) A dram of reproach—"eale" in the sense of reproach still being used in the western countries.

(3) A dram of evil—This last interpretation has generally been accepted, then next line is open to doubt. Two emendations may be considered—(i) Doth all the noble substance offer doubt ; (ii) doth all the noble substance oft doubt. In either case the meaning is . a dram of evil brings upon the whole noble substance lowering it to its own scandalous level. Strachey offers this interpretation—" . . the editors all adopt Stevens's conjectural emendation and often do out (*i. e.* quench). But the old text seems to me better ; the noble substance is not quenched or destroyed, but soiled 'o'erleavened,' corrupted, and so its proper excellence brought into doubt"

39 Angels us—Hamlet is afraid that it might be an evil spirit, come in the shape of his father to tempt him to some desperate deed. This suspicion, he cannot wholly expel from his mind. This partly accounts for his delay in executing his revenge.

40 A spirit of health—a good and gracious spirit. Goblin damn'd—an evil spirit, an agent of the devil.

41 Bring .hell—NB "The Ghost-scenes in *Hamlet* can not rightly be understood without some study of Elizabethan spiritualism,

Practically everyone in that age, including probably Shakespeare himself, believed in ghosts. Reginald Scot, one of the few exceptions, wrote a notorious book entitled, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 1584, which contained an elaborate discourse upon devils and spirits explaining ghosts as either the illusion of persons suffering from 'melancholy' or flat knavery on the part of some rogue. Shakespeare knew the book and used it for *Macbeth*, while the attitude of Horatio towards the apparition in the first scene of *Hamlet* is probably a stage reflection James ordered his treatise to be publicly burnt by the hangman after his accusation. Far more representative was another controversy about ghosts, which exercised some of the wisest minds of that time, and concerned their provenance, not their objectivity. The traditional view, coming down from the middle ages, and held by most unthinking persons, was that they were permitted to return from Purgatory to communicate with living men and women. But Protestants had ceased to believe in Purgatory, and they could hardly suppose that souls in bliss in heaven would willingly return to earth or that souls might be released from hell to do so. Many of them, therefore, came to the conclusion that ghosts could not possibly be the dead, but must be spirits of another sort. They might conceivably be angels, but in most instances they were undoubtedly devils who 'assumed'—such was the technical word—the form of the departed for their own evil purposes. Catholic theologians, on the other hand, defended the traditional explanation with much learning and industry."

—J D Wilson

42 Be thy charitable—whether your purpose be evil or kindly.

44. Thou comest ... shape—you come in such a shape that I must question you.

46. Let . ignorance—do not keep me in suspense.

47. Canonized horses—bones buried with due ceremony of the church. Hearsed—buried.

48. Burst . cerements—broken through and escaped from the grave-clothes. Sepulchre—tomb

49. Inurn'd—enclosed

50. Oped jaws—opened its heavy and marble gates.

51. To cash again—to send you back to the earth

52. In complete steel—in full armour.

53. Revisit'st . moon—walk the earth again in moonlight

54. Making night hideous—filling the night with horror. *Fools of nature*—(1) mortals with frail understanding, (2) the sport of nature who deals with us as she pleases.

55. To shake our disposition—to move our souls.

56. With thoughts souls—with thoughts too deep to be apprehended by our souls.

55-56. So horridly to shake souls—*N B.* Hamlet's first reaction is whether it is an evil spirit that has assumed his father's shape. Then he seems to take more kindly to it as the spirit of his father. And soon he is carried to the realm of abstract thought. We may note the differences between Horatio and Hamlet. Horatio thinks about the ghost that it has something to communicate concerning the fate of Denmark. Hamlet is troubled by thought "beyond the reaches of our souls"

57. What . do—what do you demand of us?

59. Importment—communication

60. Courteous action—gentle and graceful gesture

61. Removed ground—remote place.

63. It will it—as the ghost will not otherwise speak, I must follow it.

65. I do not fee—I do not set any value on my life. Either Hamlet is indifferent to life, or he has grown so desperate that he is prepared to risk his life if he could but know what the ghost had to disclose

66. For my soul—as for my soul

66-67. What can it itself—the spirit can do no harm to the soul because it is as immortal as the spirit itself.



69. Flood—river or sea  
 70. Dreadful cliff—dizzy height of the crag.  
 71. That beetles sea—that overhangs the sea  
 72 73. And there assume reason—and take on some  
 terrifying shape and overwhelm your reason or make you  
 lose your reason. Your sovereignty of reason—i. e. your  
 mastery or possession of reason  
 74 Draw madness—drive you mad.  
 75. Toys of desperation—desperate fancies.  
 76 Without motive—involuntarily.  
 77-78 That looks beneath—who looks down into the  
 sea from the top of the cliff and hears its deafening roar  
 80 Hold . hands—take off your hands and let me go.  
 81. Be ruled—take our advice My fate .. out—Hamlet  
 cannot resist the call of the ghost, it becomes to him the call  
 of fate.  
 83 Nemean lion's nerve—it was the first task of Hercules  
 to kill the Nemean lion.  
 82 83 Makes each nerve—i. e. fills me with the  
 strength and courage of the Nemean lion  
 84. Unhand me—take off your hands from me  
 85. I'll make me—I will kill him who holds me back  
 Hamlet uses a trivial and even vulgar phrases—'*make a ghost*  
*of*,' but often such triviality of expression helps to relieve the  
 tension of feeling as here  
 86 I say away—Hamlet might bid his companions off or  
 wave the ghost.  
 87 Waxes imagination—grows desperate with fantasy.  
 89 Have after—follow him. Issue—result,  
 90 Something Denmark—Even Marcellus thinks that  
 the ghost's visitation is connected with the prevailing vice  
 and corruption in Denmark  
 91. Direct—lay bare.

## SCENE V

*Analysis* Hamlet refuses to go any farther and bids the ghost speak. The ghost begs all his attention. It is almost time that he should go back to hell. The first cry of the ghost is revenge which is imposed on Hamlet, so 'it is his father's spirit speaking to him. He tells Hamlet that it is part of his punishment to walk for a certain period of time and endure

the hell fire during the day until his crimes have been expiated. He cannot, however, reveal the secrets of his prison-house to mortal ears. If he were permitted to make the revelation, it would make him shudder. He appeals to Hamlet to avenge the murder of his father. Hamlet most solemnly promises to do it. Then the ghost tells the story of his murder.

It had been reported that while sleeping in his garden, as his daily habit was, he was stung by a serpent. His uncle was the serpent that stung him. The seduction of his wife was the worst part of it. He could not imagine that she should have bestowed her love upon a person so inferior to himself. She seemed to have been virtuous, for virtue would have resisted the seductive art of his brother. His death was caused in this manner. his brother poured into his ears the juice of hebenon, and at once a leper like scurf spread over his body, and as the poison entered his blood, it shrivelled him up. He was in fact despatched in the blossom of his sin, without any chance being given to repent and to be absolved.

He appeals again to Hamlet; if he has any affection for him, he must take revenge, and must not permit lechery to stain the royal bed of Denmark. But he bids Hamlet spare his mother; let her but suffer the pricks of conscience. As the day begins to break, the ghost takes leave of him.

Hamlet seems to be shattered to pieces by the ghost's revelation. He can never forget the charge laid upon him. From his memory he is determined to efface all impressions save what the ghost has imprinted on it. He takes out his note-book and writes it down that one may smile and smile and be a villain still.

Hamlet is now joined by Marcellus and Horatio. Hamlet at once, pulls himself, and puts them off with evasive answers to their questions. He at last manages to dismiss them. He begs of them one favour. It is that they must not say anything about the ghost, and he makes them swear to keep it an absolute secret. The voice of the ghost from beneath the earth bids them swear. They are made to shift places and swear thrice. Hamlet makes a last request to Horatio that he is not to comment on his future behaviour, if ever he put on an antic disposition.

*Critical Note.* The dramatic movement of the scene is Hamlet's revulsion of feeling. The story of the murder beyond anything that he could have conceived harrows his soul and body. After the ghost is gone, a tragic cry breaks from him

O all you host of heaven ! O earth ! what else ?  
And shall I couple hell ?

He must have lost all faith in human nature. It is the visible presence of hell that staggers Hamlet. There is his significant gesture in writing down in his note-book that one may smile and smile and be a villain. The very triviality of it in the face of a grave mental crisis may surprise critics and readers. The trivial and even meaningless action is not a sign of sanity that is going, but is an urge to cling to his sanity and not to let it flounder.

Quiller-coach gives the right explanation of this action : "Reading the commentators one would think that to discover your father had been murdered and your mother to be an incestuous adulteress were all in the day's work. So they fall to discovering it 'o be strange, nay, even a little absurd that a man after such a shock should call for his tablets. Can they not see that under such a shock a decent man must dread that his mind is going ? 'Remember thee' . . . Remember thee ! 'Remember' is the word telling above all the chaos in his brain ; and as a drowning man at a straw he snatches the tablets. Men in such extremity always snatch on some concrete, some trivial thing. Why will not these scholars start with a little practice in learning about men and women ? Has none of them heard, perchance, of sailors, who, when their ship was going down and the last hope had perished, have slipped quietly below and started to shave ? What are lives—if they do not know, if they cannot even surmise, that when this solid world seems breaking under the feet of any sound man in health and strength, it is always some such small solid trifle that he grips ?—Ay, and woman, too ! Let us recall Beatrice Conci as she goes to her death

Give yourself no unnecessary pain,  
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, mother, tie  
My girdle for me and bind up this hair

In any simple knot . ay, that does well  
 And yours, I see, is coming down. How often  
 Have we done this for one another ; now  
 We shall not do it any more. My lord,  
 We are quite ready.

So it is with that letting down of hysteria in which Hamlet, hearing the voice of the ghost underfoot as he swears Horatio and Marcellus to secrecy, the two touching the cross of his swore-hilt, break into wild scoffing—all the while facing it out before them :

(Ghost beneath). Swear.

Hamlet. Aha, boy ! Say'st thou so ? art thou there true penny ? Come on . you hear this fellow in the cellarage , consent to swear

The critics who object to this are the very critics, of course who cannot abide that knocking on the gate in *Macbeth* and that vulgar porter."

#### NOTES

1. Where will ... further—Hamlet has followed the ghost till now and refuses to go any farther, and bids him speak.

2. Mark me—these two words at once rivet Hamlet's attention to what the ghost is going to disclose.

3. Sulphurous ... flames—the fire in hell, which is said to be kept burning by sulphur and brimstone.

4. Render up myself—surrender myself. The ghost enjoys a temporary respite from hell-fire.

5. Pity .. . not—your pity will do me little good. Lend ... .. hearing—give all your attention.

6. Unfold—disclose I am . . . hear—Hamlet thinks that he has a moral obligation to hear the ghost, because he may reveal something about the state.

7. So art ... hear—when you have heard, it will be your duty to revenge.

10. Doomed - it is part of his punishment that he should walk at night for a certain period of time,

11. Confined—i.e. confined in hell Fast in feres—fasting was considered one of the greatest torments of hell. Compare. "And moreover the mysese of hellē shall been in defante of mete and drink"—Chaucer, *Parson's Tale*.

12. In my days of nature—in my mortal existence  
 13. Burnt—the idea of fire ordeal Purged—purified  
 15 To tell . prison house—to reveal the mystery of hell  
 15 Whose lightest word—i. e. the barest description of the sufferings in hell.  
 16 Harrow . . soul—fill you with fear and anguish Freeze. blood—congeal your blood.  
 17 Make your . . spheres—cause your eyes to burst out of their sockets Like stars . . spheres—according to the Ptolemaic theory the sun, the moon the planets and stars were fixed in a series of concentric hollow spheres, by the motion of which they were made to revolve round the earth as centre,  
 18. Thy knotted . . part—your tangled hair to separate,  
 19 Each particular hair—each individual hair. Stand on end—stand erect, bristle up  
 20. Quills—bristles. Fretful—sensitive. Porcupine—porcupine.  
 21. Eternal blazon—proclamation of the deep secrets of eternity Must not be—must not be made  
 22 Ears of flesh and blood—mortal ears List—listen. The repetition is meant to enforce the attention of Hamlet to what now follows  
 26. As in the best it is—murder in any case in a foul crime -  
 29- Haste me—; e hasten me  
 29—30 With wings .... love—as quick as meditation or thoughts of love  
 31 Sweep . . revenge—the metaphor of an eagle or hawk swooping down on its prey. With wings . . . revenge—Hamlet could not act according to this declaration, for his revenge was delayed for several reasons, one of which being his not being certain of the identity of the ghost and of the truth of his disclosure Apt—ready to obey me.  
 32 And duller. . . weed—you will be more torpid and waning in sensibility than the rank weed  
 33 Roots . . ease—flourishes carelessly. Lethe wharf—the bank of Lethe, the river of forgetfulness in the lower world.

34. Would it..... this—if you would take the necessary action in this matter.

37. Forged process—invention of a lie.

38. Rankly abused—grossly deceived.

40. O my prophetic soul—N. B. There was, a suspicion in his mind, concerning his father's death. It was a premonitory instinct. Now it is confirmed by the ghost. That incestuous . . . . beast—the implication is that his brother first seduced Gertrude, when Hamlet's father was alive, and after his murder, married her incestuously.

42. Witchcraft of wit—charm of speech and manners. Traitorous gifts—the accomplishments and artifices of a traitor

45. Won . . lust—seduced the queen.

56. Seeming virtuous—pretending to be virtuous.

47. What . . . . there—what a decline it was!

48-50. Whose love . . . . . marriage—whose love was so sincere and exalted that it absolutely corresponded to my marriage vow. Decline—fall

41-52. Whose natural gifts . . . . mine—who cannot be compared with me in respect of virtues and accomplishments.

53-54. But virtue . . . . heaven—but as a really virtuous person cannot be tempted to sin by a lustful person though looking like an angel. Lewdness—i. e. lustful person. Abstract for concrete. In a 'shape of heaven'—i. e. having the beauty and grace of an angel

55. Though . . . . link'd—if associated with a person having the beauty and grace of an angel.

56. Sate itself—feed itself, full. Celestial bed—the same idea as 'radiant angel'

57. Prey on garbage—i. e. fool itself; thrive on sensuality.

58. Scent . . . air—smell the breeze of dawn.

61. Upon my secure hour—the hour when I slept free from care. Upon . . stole—your uncle stealthily approached me when I slept unsuspectingly.

62. Hebenon—usually explained as henbane. Vial—phial

63. Porches—entrances.

64. Leperous distilment— an extract that caused leprosy to appear on the skin.

64-65. Whose effect . . . man—which has such a poisonous effect upon the human blood

67 The natural body—the veins and arteries.

68. Posset—curdle.

69. Eager . with—acid very quick in action in turning milk bad.

71. A most instant . about—an instantaneous eruption broke out on my body, spreading like a bark on a tree.

72. 'Lazar like—like a leper. Lepers were called lazars, from Lazarus, the beggar of *St. Luke XVI*. Crust—scurl.

75. Dispatch'd—deprived.

76. Cut off sin—killed in the full ripeness of sin (which needed confession and absolution)

77 Unhouseld'—without receiving the Holy Eucharist Disappointed—in the literal sense of *unappointed* : & unprepared by confession and repentance, Ununcted—without receiving the extreme unction Unhousehold . . . unaneled—he means that he died without receiving the last rites of religion.

78. No reckoning made—there being no settling of my accounts with God by confession and repentance of sin. Sent . . . account—s, & killed or sent to God to render account there.

79. With all my imperfection . head—'in the blossoms of my sin'

80 O, horrible—the manner of his death strikes him so horrible because he was given no chance of confessing his sin, and because it meant a long period expiation.

81 Nurture—natural affection. If thou hast . . . not—if you have any affection for your father, you must take revenge.

82—83. Let not the royal bed . . . Incest—it is painful and humiliating to the ghost that his queen should live in incestuous union with his brother and thus defile the royal bed of Denmark. Luxury—lust

84 However . . . out—whatever action you take in accomplishing your revenge.

85 I aint . . . mind—do not let your mind be diverted against your mother. Contrive—plan

85 Aught—any punishment. Leave . . . . . heaven—let God deal with her.

86-87. And to those thorns . . . her—and leave her to the pricks and reproaches of her conscience

87. Glow worm—a species of beetle, which emits a green light at the tail *Matin*—morning.

90 *Gins*—begins. *Pale* fire—lose its bright glow in the light of the dawn *Uneffectual*—becoming dim *A proleptic use*

92-93. O all you host of heaven . . . hell—When the ghost disappears, he invokes the heavenly host of angels, and also the earth then he hesitates whether he should invoke hell too. N B, Hamlet was a student in the Protestant University of Wittenberg—a scholar and rationalist. It is, therefore, difficult for him to believe that the ghost is a good spirit. When the ghost was present, his scepticism was in abeyance; but when the ghost is gone, and the spell his speech cast upon him is no more, his doubt revives. His doubt is suppressed. When he asked himself whether he should couple hell, he cries, 'O, fie!' He would believe the ghost. For the time he thinks that it is a good spirit.

Hold . . . my heart—let not my heart burst. He is left staggering by the ghost's revelation

94. *Sinews*—nerves and muscles.

95 *Bear up*—bear me up with your failing strength.

95-97 Remember thee . . . globe—The ghost implored Hamlet to remember him. Hamlet cannot forget the ghost who is the spirit of his murdered father, and who has laid upon him the sacred and solemn task of revenge. He will remember the ghost so long as his memory functions, lodged as it is in a perplexed and distracted brain. This distracted globe—Hamlet places his hand upon his head which is deeply agitated and perplexed.

98. The table of my memory—the memory is compared to a note-book

99. I'll wipe . . . records—I will remove all insignificant, foolish impressions

100. All saws of books—all maxims he learnt from books. There is a hint again that he was a scholar, and was likely to shape his conduct by the 'saws of books'. Pressures—impressions.

101. That . . . there—which his experience and observation in his youth registered there.



102, And thy commandment . . . live—nothing else will dwell in my memory than the task you have ordered me to perform.

103. The book . . . brain—the 'metaphor of the 'table (a note book) is continued).

104. Unmix'd . . . matter—free from any unworthy thoughts or ideas His mind is to be possessed entirely by the thought of revenge

92—104 O all you host of heaven . . . matter—*Expl.* When the ghost departs after having told Hamlet the story of his murder and the betrayal by his queen, it has a staggering effect upon his mind. With the mind of a scholar and rationalist his first impulse is to believe that the ghost is an evil spirit. He cries upon the host of angels; he cries upon the earth; and might as well have cried upon hell. But he soon realizes that it cannot be an evil spirit having assumed the shape of his father; for all that he has been told, seems to be true, and confirms by his own suspicion. He is unable to recover from the effect of the horrifying revelation. He is afraid that his heart may burst and his legs may give way under him. Now he recalls the last words of the ghost. The ghost begged him to remember him (the ghost). He will now remove all insignificant and foolish thoughts and ideas from his memory—all maxims he has learnt from books, all impressions whatsoever; nothing but the ghost's command shall dwell in his memory. He will empty his memory of all its contents—all that his youthful observation stored there, and he will think of nothing else than revenge, which has been imposed upon him by the ghost.

105. O most . . . woman—his first thought is of his mother who had played so false with his father. Pernicious—wicked

105. O villain . . . damned villain—the contrast between the oily, smooth speech and manners of Claudius and his darkest villainy forces itself upon his mind. It is as great a shock to him as his mother's treachery.

107. My tables—he takes out his note-book. N. B. Hamlet takes out his note-book and writes in it that one may smile, and be a villain still. This action has been misinterpreted by some critics. It has been discussed in the critical

note. Let it be pointed out again that it illustrates an important psychological truth. For the moment the image of his uncle's villainy possesses his mind, and takes the edge off the sharp anguish of his own personal experience. It is a sort of diversion which saves his reason from tottering into insanity.

We quote also J. D. Wilson's note on the picturesque significance of 'tables':—"... every Elizabethan gallant or Inns of-court man carried his table book about him, for use on all sorts of occasions, to copy down 'saws or books' as he read, memorable passages from some sermon that took his fancy, witty remarks overheard in conversation, 'toff-ta phrases, terms precise, three-piled hyperboles' that come his way and if captured might be used again by himself as opportunity offered. I call to mind an undergraduate of my acquaintance at Cambridge thirty years ago, who filled note books with epigrams from Oscar Wilde's plays and essays with which he afterwards larded his own talk; and the young men of Shakespeare's day took the same path."

109 At least . . . Denmark—if this is not true elsewhere it must be true in Denmark

110. So . . . . you are—So I see what a villain you are, uncle

Word—It may be explained as watch-word or as the commandment left by the ghost. But J. D. Wilson explains it as motto, in the heraldic sense, on a knight's coat of arms or shield, which expressed, often in riddling or cryptic fashion, the cause or ideal to which the life of the bearer was sworn. "Hamlet solemnly dedicates himself to the service of the quest which the Ghost has laid upon him, adopting as his motto his father's parting words. By a touch at once of supreme irony, and of profound psychological insight, the 'Word' his creator gives him is 'Adieu, adieu remember me!'"

111. Heaven secure him—may God keep him safe!

116 Hillo, ho, ho—Hamlet parodies Horatio's cry. It is the falconer's cry calling down the hawk from her flight. N.B. Hamlet has perforce pulled himself together. He must not betray the agitation and the deep distress of his mind to his companions. Some critics already regard Hamlet as partly unbalanced. But it should not be forgotten that he needed to keep a strong grip on himself, if he were to

accomplish the task laid upon him. He assumes a partly flippant manner in his necessity of being cautious for he cannot let his companions suspect the nature of the communication, made by the ghost to him.

118. O, wonderful—He pretends to discuss tightly the matter of the ghost,

119 No it—he is just playing with Horatio.

121. How say . . . . . it—Hamlet, just mystifies his companions

123—124 There's never a villain . . . knave—this is a common place remark, and it needed no ghost to communicate it to Hamlet. So it appears to Horatio. The fact is that Hamlet cannot reveal anything about the ghost to his companions, but the trouble is that he cannot be rude

125. Why . . . right—Hamlet has to confess that it is something absurd.

127. Circumstance—circumlocution

128. I hold it fit . . . part—This is the most polite way of dismissing his companions and intimating to them that he cannot confide the secret to them

128. As your business . . . you—i. e. follow your own pleasure and business

133 These . . . words—these words convey no meaning.

134 I'm sorry . . . heartily—Hamlet at once apologises to his friend, perceiving that he has hurt feelings

135 There's offence—I have no' taken it ill.

836. Saint Patrick—St Patrick is the keeper of Purgatory and so Hamlet conveys to Horatio the sceptic that it is an honest ghost, coming from Purgatory and not from hell

"In connection with the 'offence' there is special propriety in the oath. It was given out that a serpent stung Hamlet's father; the serpent wears his crown. St. Patrick was the proper saint to take cognisance of such an offence, having banished serpents from Ireland. In Richard II, II : 157 Shakespeare alludes to the freedom of Ireland from venomous creature"—*Dowden*

But there is, Horatio—Hamlet is full conscious that he has been unfair to his friend,

126. Touching . . . here—regarding the ghost.

137. It is . . . . . you—all that I can tell you is that it is a good spirit.

139-140. For your desire . . . . .may—as for your desire to know what has passed between me and the spirit, you should conquer it as you can

144. Never make . . . to night—my request to you is that you should not disclose what you had witnessed to-night

147. Upon my sword—Hamlet asks them to swear upon his sword for the hilt of the sword has the shape of a cross.

148. Indeed, upon my sword—'For Horatio and Marcellus are very naturally unwilling to take the oath that he demands of them Would it not be sacrilegious, even spiritually dangerous, to swear a solemn oath under such circumstances? They give their word they will divulge nothing. He asks them to swear it, and they promise further that 'in faith' they will not Horatio procrastinatingly yields to the extent of a 'propose the oath, my lord.' But they never do take the oath in words, though Hamlet may chide to so assume—and, his frenzy passing, this may content him that they do so silently"—  
*Granville Barber.*

Beneath—The voice of ghost comes from beneath the stage.

150. Ah, ha, boy—Hamlet keeps up his levity just to deceive himself and his companions. True-penny—honest fellow J D Wilson points out that it is a mining term, which signifies a particular indication in the soil of the direction in which ore is to be found.

151. Come on—come and swear. In the cellarage—underground

156. Hio and ubique—here and every where. These are Latin words "The repetition of the oath, the shifting of the ground, and the Latin phrase are taken from the ceremony of conjurers

161. Old mole—"the epithets "old mole," 'pioneer,' and perhaps 'true-penny' refer to the common superstition that devils might work like miners beneath the ground and that their rumblings could be heard"—J D Wilson. Canst . . . . so fast—Hamlet means the quick movement of the ghost underground.

162. Poiner—digger.

163. O day and night—Horatio swears by day and night.

164. As a stranger—Hamlet quibbles with 'strange' in the above line.

167. (i) Your philosophy—Horatio's sceptical, rationalistic philosophy; (ii) 'your' is colloquial.

166 167. There are philosophy—there are stranger phenomena, both material and spiritual, than philosophy or philosophers can explain N. B this may be a rebuke to Horatio's sceptical or rationalistic turn of mind.

169 So help you mercy—may God save your soul provided you keep my secret

170 How strange .. myself—how queer and fantastic my behaviour may appear to be

172 To put .. on—to behave like a mad man

174 Encumber'd—folded. Thus—Hamlet demonstrates it. His head shake—Hamlet shows how it is done.

175 Pronouncing .. phrase—making use of ambiguous expression

176. "Will .. know"—these are the doubtful phrases. An if—if.

178. Ambiguous giving out—expression of double meaning Note—signify.

179 That .. me—that you know anything of my secret This not to do—you should swear that you would not do any such thing

180 Grace and mercy—God's favour and kindness.

181. Perturbed—restless Rest . . . . spirit—Hamlet changes now to a more serious manner

183. With all my love . . . . you—my best greeting to you

185 So poor a man—He does not in any case allude to his loss of the throne, but takes a very poor opinion of himself, either because he is given to melancholy, or views the situation with despair.

186 Friending—friendship.

188 Still your fingers lips—a gesture of secrecy.

189—190 The time is out of joint right—N B Hamlet has a tendency to *generalize* what is particular. He has his own problem to solve—the revenge and how to execute it, and he co relates to the state of things in Denmark. He has already an idea of vice and corruption, prevailing in Denmark on which he has more than once harped Now his personal task of revenge is lifted into the larger duty of correction or purge He has got not only to avenge the murder of his

father, and save his mother from shame and degradation, but to fight against the evil time, which seems to be epitomized in his uncle's crime and in his mother's incest, and also in the political troubles that seem to threaten the safety of Denmark. There is point in Hamlet's cry—"The time is out of joint."—and he realizes too the immense, superhuman task that lies ahead, viz 'to set it right' He considers himself the most unhappy fellow because this task of setting right things which show moral confusion and disintegration, apart from avenging his father's murder, which is but an issue of the general state of things, falls upon him *Out of joint*—disorganized *O cursed spite*—it is the irony of fate that I have to deal with the situation. It should be remembered that Hamlet is a scholar, and not practical man of action. He might recoil from the tremendous task that depends on his will of, and capacity for, action

191 Nay together—N.B. If he cannot share his secret with his companions, by which action he believes he has hurt their feelings, he makes up for it by cordiality of his friendship Here we have the image of Hamlet as he might have been in normal circumstances of life—it is the image that Ophelia calls up in her memorable words later when she finds herself the most dejected of women on her discovery that Hamlet has lost his reason.

## ACT II

### SCENE I

**Analysis :** Polonius is sending Reynaldo with money and letters to Laertes in Paris. He instructs him to make cautious inquiries about Laertes in Paris, he should, therefore, contact the Danes living there, and indirectly learn from them all that is needs to be known about Laertes. Polonius instructs him in minute particulars; for example, when in conversation with such gentlemen he may incidentally refer to common vices of youngmen, and then mention Laertes, and watch the reaction in the gentlemen he is talking to.

Suddenly Ophelia rushes in and informs her father that Hamlet behaved in a strange manner. He had entered her room in a strange and distracted state, his look most piteous, as if he were a spirit loosed out of hell. Polonius concludes that Hamlet is mad for love. These are the details of the

interview that Ophelia gives her father. Hamlet took her by the wrist and gazed long into her face, and at last when she gently shook him off, he waved his head thrice up and down, heaved a deep sigh and released, and then with his head turned over his shoulder, he retreated without making use of his eyes.

Polonius, at once decides to go to the king and report the matter on the basis of his own view that it is the very ecstasy of love in Hamlet. He thinks immediate action necessary, otherwise it may end in a disaster. Polonius learns that Ophelia in obeying her father, has lately refused his letters, and refused to see him. Polonius easily fixes the cause of his madness. All that he has to do now is to run to the king and enlighten him even if he might not be pleased to hear of this affair of love.

**Critical Note**—This scene partly relaxes the tension of the previous scene, and there is a hint that two months or so have passed. Here we see Polonius in another loathsome aspect. He does not spare even his son from his spying activities. Reynaldo whom he is sending with money and letters, is also to act as a spy on his son. He does not keep apart his crooked policy and domestic life. It has already been seen that he has poisoned the domestic life for Ophelia. Laertes who is away in Paris, is not safe from the tentacles of his policy.

H Granville Baker writes, "Now the key of the whole action is to be changed, transposed from the mystery and terror of those haunted battlements, the poignancy of Hamlet's grief and shame, to the rippling movement of a court life now restored to its normal round. In this deceptive climate the tragedy will be becalmed for a while. It is upon such waters that Polonius steers with this,

See you now ;  
Your bast of falshood takes this carp of truth ;  
And thus do we, of wisdom and of reach,  
With windlasses and with assays of bias  
By indirections find directions out . . . . .

Such will shortly be the scene of the king's bidding to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and something such as the method of Hamlet's counterminings,

Duplicity, manoeuvring, ambush and trap, no one-knowing how much the other knows : that is the new phase and it appropriately falls to Polonius to initiate it with the sending of his mean little embassy to spy upon his son. For he is to make himself the centre of its wiles, and to suffer a type of its fatality at last "

In the meantime—a period of two months or so—Hamlet, by putting on "an antic disposition," has succeeded in creating the impression that he is gone mad. Under the smoke-screen of madness he may keep himself safe from the spies, employed by the king, and accomplish his own purpose. His first significant act is to startle Ophelia with a visit in which he behaves rather wildly and fantastically. And Ophelia runs in to her father at once and gives her an accurate account of the affair. Hamlet's purpose is accomplished. Dealing with two of his craftiest enemies—the king and Polonius—he has to be as crafty as or more crafty than they. Polonius is the right man to be convinced of his madness for he will then try to convince the king of it. His immunity lies in this course, and so he pays a visit to Ophelia, and the poor girl is shocked and frightened beyond measure. Let it be noted too that his playing the part of a madman kept him from going mad—it was living with an illusion in order to escape the reality.

## NOTES

3—5 You shall do . . . behaviour—Polonius suggests at the outset that his function is to act as a spy and report to him. The father, such has been his breeding at court, is spying upon the son.

His behaviour—his way of life, his doings, the company he keeps.

I did .. it—evidently on his own initiative he was going to do a bit of spying.

6. Inquire me—'me' is ethic dative. Danskers—Danes.

7. How—how they live. Who—who they are and their position in society. What means—their financial position. Keep—lodge. -

10. By this encompassment .... question—by such indirect method of inquiry.



11—12. Come you . it—get to know the facts better than by putting direct questions. Particular demands—direct questions

13 Take you . him—assume that you have a slight acquaintance with him

15 Do this—do you see my point?

18 Very . wild—dissolute or unprincipled.

19. Addicted so—given to such and such vices. Put on him—ascribe to him.

20. Forgeries—fictitious vices Rank—gross

21 As him—as may bring him into disgrace.

22—24 As are companions . liberty—as accompany youth and freedom that young men enjoy. Gaming—gambling

25. Fencing—professional fencers were in ill repute in the days of Shakespeare N. B. Mr Middleton's *Spanish Gypsy II* : Sancho comes in 'from playing with fencers,' having lost cloak, band, and rapier at dice. The ill repute of fencers appears from other passages in Elizabethan drama. In Dekker's *Gul's Harm Books* he speaks of the danger to a rich young man of being 'set upon' by fencers and cony-catchers

26 You far—you may mention these vices. Breathe quantity—allude to these vices so ingeniously.

27. Taints of liberty—faults picked up by young men in their free unrestricted life of pleasure

28 The flash mind—the breaking forth of an impulse and passionate mind

29—30 A savageness . assault—wildness of disposition to which undisciplined young men are exposed.

31. Wherefore this—Reynaldo wants to grasp his business thoroughly He knows the purpose of all these inquiries, but he wants to hear it from the mouth of Polonius.

32. Here's my drift—this is my point.

33 Fetch of warrant—stroke of policy justified by its results, &c

34 Sullies—blemishes

35 As 't were . working—(1) as if they have been exaggerated a little in report . (2) they had been a little worn or laded in use or practice.

37 Your party in converse—the person whom you engage in conversation. Sound—measure

- 38 Prenominate—above mentioned.
39. The youth .. guilty—the young man you accuse.
40. Closes .. consequence—falls in with you to this effect
- 42 Addition—title.
45. What say—Polonius loses the thread of his discourse By the mass—a wild oath. "Mass" is the celebration of the Eucharist
52. Or then, or then—on such and such occasions,
53. Or took rouse—(1) overcome in his cups; (2) surprised while drunk.
- 54 There falling . tennis—it might recall the famous quarrel in a tennis court between Sir Philip Sidney and the Earl of Oxford
55. House of sale—bro'hel.
57. Your bait truth—falsehood is used as a bait to catch the carp of truth. 'Carp' is a fish proverbially foolish
- 58 Reach—understanding
- 59 Windlass—circuitous courses Assays of bias—efforts in which instead of going straight to the object, we seek to reach it by a winding course A metaphor from bowls. The bias is the leaden weight attached to the bowl which makes it roll in a curved line so that the player cannot aim it direct at the jack
- 60 By indirection . out—find out the truth by indirect means.
61. Lecture—instruction.
- 57—62 Your bait of falsehood .. son—*Expl* Polonius is sending Reynaldo with money and letters to Laertes in Paris But as one fully trained in court intrigue and corruption, he has but shrewd suspicion of his son's doings in Paris. And he wants Reynaldo to spy upon him. He gives minute instruction. Reynaldo must, following these instructions, find out everything about Laertes in Paris. He is to go about this business in a crooked way, he must make an indirect circuitous approach to the subject by getting hold of somebody who knows and keeps company with Laertes. Polonius tells him that this is the policy, followed by a wiseman (and Polonius has a profound faith in his wisdom). It is the policy of a wise man to find out the truth by indirect means
63. God .. you—goodbye

65 Observe . yourself—mark his attitude towards you.  
 67. Ply his own music—go his own way. Let him go on to what time he pleases" — *Dowden*.

69 Affrighted—frightened

70 With what God—Polonius keeps cool and impersonal after having seen his daughter's terror and amazement.

71 Closet—private room.

72. Doublet—jacket Unbraced—loose and open.

74 Down gyved—fallen like fetters.

72—75 With his doublet . shirt—compare the marks of a man in love in *As you like it* iii. ii. "A lean cheek . a blue eye and sunken . an unquestionable spirit . a beard neglected . then your hose should be ungartered, your sleeve unbuckled, your shoe unried and everything about you demonstrating a careless desolation.

77. Loosed—released.

79 Mad love—Polonius at once jumps to a conclusion—and it obsesses him . It is evident from this that the report of Hamlet's madness has been current for sometime ; it has been exercising the minds of the king and his council. His antic disposition amazes the king, his mother, Polonius and Ophelia. Now Polonius believes that he has discovered the cause of his madness, and is soon going to make much of this discovery.

80 I do fear it—Ophelia cannot tell whether Hamlet is mad, but she is certain that his behaviour has startled and frightened her.

82. Goes arms—stands back to the length of the arm.

83 Thus o'er his brow—Ophelia shows it by action.

84—85 He falls . . . it—he begins to study my face as if he would paint it

86 A little . mine—i. e. Hamlet shook Ophelia's arm a little

8 . Thus waving up and down—Ophelia shows by action.

88-90 He raised . . being—he drew a heavy and painful sigh that seemed to break him to pieces and end his very life

91. With his head . turn'd—with his head turned behind N. B. Hamlet, it should not be doubted, deliberately acted as a madman in the scene with Ophelia . It need not puzzle anybody . It has been pointed out above that his madness (feigned of course) was a necessity to him

for his own protection. It ought not to be forgotten that to Horatio alone Hamlet talks sense, and like a sane man. He might have done the same to Ophelia if he had ever loved her. He knew that she would play into the hands of her father and his uncle. On the other hand it would serve his purpose well to startle Ophelia with his assumed madness so that both her father and his uncle might be easily taken in, for she would report the matter to her father, and he, to the king.

92. He seem'd . . . eyes—he could go out without making use of his eyes.

93. Bended . . . me—kept their gaze fixed upon me.

96. Ecstasy—madness

97. Whose violent . . . itself—which in its excess is self-destructive. Polonius means that love, driven to excess, destroys itself.

98. Leads . . . undertakings—renders one desperate in his action.

100. That . . . natures—to which we are subject as mortals

96-100 This is the every ecstasy afflict our natures—*Expl.* Polonius hears first how Hamlet has behaved with Ophelia. He was just like madman. Polonius at once concludes that he is mad for love, and then like a wise and experienced man he makes the following remark: it is the very madness of love, and love, when driven to such excess, destroys itself, and will render the person violent in action like any other mortal passion or feeling.

102. Repel—reject.

103-104 Denied . . . me—refused to see him.

105-106. I am sorry . . . him—I should have more carefully and cautiously studied him. He confesses that he was guilty of a hasty judgement in forbidding all interviews between his daughter and Hamlet. I fear'd . . . trifle—I was afraid that he was flirting with you.

107 Wreck—ruin. Beshrew my jealousy—let my suspicion be cursed—

108. It . . . age—suspicion seems to be as common among old people

109. To cast . . . opinions—to over reach ourselves; to be over-cautious.

110-111. As it is . . . discretion—as it is common for young people to show a lack of wisdom. Go we .. king—let us go to the king.

112 This known—we must let him know this.

111-113 Which, being kept close . . . love—"The king may be angry at my telling of Hamlet's love, but more grief would come from hiding it" (*Moberly*)

### SCENE II

*Analysis* The king who has invited Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, once Hamlet's intimate friends, to his court, is going to employ them to tackle Hamlet and find out what his trouble is. The king tells them that Hamlet's condition troubles him, which he cannot otherwise account for than by his father's death. The duty of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, while they are requested to stay for sometime at court, will be, as he suggests, to entertain Hamlet and find out the secret of his trouble. The queen also requests them to stay and give Hamlet the pleasure of their company.

Next enters Polonius. He first acquaints the king with the success of the mission, having returned from Norway, and tells him that he has been able to discover the cause of Hamlet's madness. The king first gives audience to Voltmand and Cornelius, who have returned from Norway. They inform the King that the King of Norway has recalled his nephew, Fortinbras and cancelled his war-like preparations against Denmark—and all that the King of Norway requests is that the forces under his nephew may be granted free passage through Denmark in an expedition against Poland. The King is pleased with the result of the mission, and dismisses the two ambassadors with thanks.

In unfolding the cause of Hamlet's trouble Polonius now proceeds with a long tedious peroration. He reads out a letter, written by Hamlet to Ophelia with his comments. It sounds as a violent declaration of love, but too extravagant and ranting to be true. He impresses upon them the seriousness with which as a father he has viewed the whole affair; and then as the result of his warning Ophelia has refused to see Hamlet, and this, he concludes, has led to Hamlet's madness. The queen does not think it unlikely. Polonius assures them that if it proves otherwise, he is prepared to

lose his head. To test his conclusion, he proposes to let loose his daughter to Hamlet, while he walks in the lobby, while he and the king will hide behind the arras and overhear them. The plan is at once carried out.

As Hamlet enters reading, Polonius meets him. Hamlet pretends not to know him and says that he is a fish-monger, and then wants to know whether he has a daughter, and if so, he wishes that Polonius should not let her walk in the sun. This seems to be a confirmation of Polonius' view that Hamlet is mad for love. Polonius next asks him what he is reading. Hamlet replies that it is only words, words, words. And when he wants to know what the matter is, Hamlet says it is a satire against old age. So Polonius concludes there is some method in his madness.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern now join Hamlet. Hamlet suspects them, and tries to mystify them. They can pump nothing out of him. He talks at random, now alluding to frustrated ambition, then to his distraction of mind. And his speech gives expression to darkest melancholy and cynicism. Hamlet questions them and they have to confess that they have come at the invitation of the King to entertain him.

Hamlet is now told that certain players in whom he used to take delight have come to Denmark. By questioning Rosencrantz and Guildenstern he finds out that they are now at the ebb of their fortune, having been ousted by boy actors, who are now in popular favour. Polonius re-enters; he comes to tell Hamlet of the arrival of the players.

Hamlet welcomes the players. He wants one of them to recite a speech in which he once delighted. At last he fixes up with them that they should play the murder of Gonzago next day.

When the players have gone, Hamlet soliloquizes. The speech, recited by the actor, showed how he was tremendously moved by the passion of it, though the theme had nothing to do with his personal feeling or interest. He has a real and passionate motive for action, and yet he has not done anything yet to avenge the murder of his father. He reproaches himself for his inaction. He must lack true manhood, or he would have long ago fed the kites on the corpse of his uncle.

He is just wasting himself on words—he can only rant and bluster, while heaven and earth have summoned him to the task of revenge. He decides that he must have definite proof of his uncle's guilt before he is going to strike, so he must get the players to play something like the murder of his father in the presence of his uncle. And while the play is on, he will carefully study the expressions of his uncle's face. If he betrays any sign of guilt, then he knows what his duty is. He still doubts whether the spirit might not be an evil spirit, for the devil may assume any shape to tempt him. The play is the thing wherein he hopes he will be able to catch the conscience of the king.

*Critical Note.* It is the longest scene in the play, and much happens to expedite the action. The madness of Hamlet has been for sometime worrying the king. And Polonius, either on his own initiative or at the bidding of the King, has got busy tracking down the cause of Hamlet's trouble. The King is not depending on Polonius alone, but has summoned two school-friends of Hamlet's with the ostensible purpose of entertaining Hamlet, but really to spy upon him.

Polonius who takes much credit for his wisdom and shrewdness, believes that he has discovered the cause of Hamlet's madness. It is a very simple solution. Hamlet is mad for love. Polonius duly acquaints the king and queen with his discovery. He is ready to put his theory to test at once, and meets Hamlet in the lobby as he enters reading. He readily believes that no further proof is needed when Hamlet, though at first he happens not to know him, alludes to his daughter and tells him not to let her walk in the sun. He is harping on his daughter, and he must be then mad for love. The point is that Polonius is a fool, and well answers to Hamlet's leg pulling of him.

Hamlet meets then Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and knows all right what their business is with him. In his dealings either with Polonius or with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet shows himself to be more acute than they are, and if some critics suppose that Hamlet is mad or at least partly mad, we find him talking very sanely about the players with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and later to the

players when they arrive. It ought not to be forgotten—as Hamlet himself does not forget for a moment—that he has to play a part. It is his deliberate purpose to behave outrageously with the king and the king's agents.

The relevance of the discussion about the players, for it has nothing to do with the action of the play, has been questioned. There is no doubt that it is a digression, but it can be defended on the ground that Hamlet, haunted by the moral evil and corruption in the real world, needs losing himself, if for a few moments, in the fictitious world of Hecuba's grief. It has also a topical interest—Shakespeare just glances at the controversy between professional players and boy actors.

The soliloquy with which the scene concludes, requires careful consideration or it may easily mislead us. The impression that it may readily convey to us is that there has been unusual delay in the execution of Hamlet's revenge, and Hamlet himself seems to be too painfully conscious of this. In his natural impatience he might complain of the delay. Barely two months or so have passed since the visitation of the ghost. In the meantime his doubt re-asserted itself—the doubt that the ghost might be an evil spirit who assumed the shape of his father to tempt him to crime. The soliloquy, leaving aside the reproaches which he heaps on himself, seems to stress this point. Hamlet's rational and analytical mind cannot easily reconcile itself to the supernatural soliciting. He must have "grounds more relative" to his revenge. While he is unpacking his heart with words, as he says, in this soliloquy, a plan dawns upon his mind. The play of the *Murder of Gonzago* can be so manifested as to supply with proof more positive of his uncle's guilt. So it will appear that Hamlet has wasted but little time towards accomplishing his purpose. It would have been otherwise if he had acted rashly, and taken or made any opportunity to dispatch his uncle in a summary way and it would have been not Hamlet, but somebody else.

"The soliloquy recharges the action to the full with the emotion which has been so long lacking, and restores to us the Hamlet bent on revenge. He sums up in it, besides all the flaws and feelings in him that have let him reach this point, time lapsed, and nothing done, it is a most inconclu-



sive summing up, however, questions asked and not answered, later to be asked again, and never plainly answered. And even were he heartless and a coward—which he certainly is not—and in yet deeper doubt, the cause of this strange innocence, we feel, would not be there. But what we ourselves have seen and heard of him (since that unexpected

The time is out of joint. O cursed spite  
That ever I was born to set it right.

warned us of the coming change) leave us, in sum with this impression, of a nature whose spiritual integrity that supernatural mandate—like an electric current splitting a substance into its elements—has for the while quite wrecked, completing thus what misery and disillusion had begun. The faculties are dislocated and at war. Feeling, faith, intellect and will each one is still alert and only the more alert unfiltered by the others, but too aware of the others for concord and each is too critical of the others in lending of mutual aid. Hamlet is now at odds not merrily with the jills of this world, but within himself, and cannot but be impotent. So when Claudius confides their delicate mission to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern there begins what we may call the counter movement of the play, the king's against Hamlet; defensive, at first, to turn offensive later. Polonius joins in it unbidden, and from then on, he or the two young men or all three of them together are there to keep a keen eye on their quarry, to note every gesture with a keen ear for every phrase. Even while they listen to the player, it is Hamlet they watch. His movement against the king may be at a stand still but the king's against him is active if only in the eloquent presence of these three; and thus the necessary dramatic tension is sustained"—*H. Granville-Barker*.

#### NOTES

2. Moreover—in addition to.
- 3—4. The need . . . sending—the need that we have of your service, caused us to send for you so hastily
5. Transformation—a euphemism for Hamlet's madness.
6. Sith—since Nor—neither,
- 6—7. Nor the exterior . . . was—Hamlet is changed both outwardly and inwardly, and is now hardly what he was before . . .

7—10. What it should . . . . of—I cannot imagine that any thing else than his father's death could have so changed him and deranged him mentally.

11. Being . . . .him—being educated together with him in youth.

12. So neighbour'd . . . humour—so closely associated with him in youth, taste and disposition.

13. Vouchsafe . . . rest—be pleased to stay.

15. To draw him . . . pleasures—to invite him to diversion of mind. To gather—that is the main idea—to get hold of Hamlet's secret

16. So much . . . . gleam—as much as you can when there is an opportunity

17. Whether. . . thus—whether anything unknown to us troubles his mind.

18. That. . . remedy—which, when disclosed, may be redressed.

21. To whom . . . . adheres—of whom he is more enamoured

22. Gentry—courtesy.

24. The supply . . . . hope—the fulfilment of the benefit that we are expecting from your companionship with Hamlet.

25—26. Your visitation . . . remembrance—the queen suggests that the king will handsomely requite their services.

27. By the sovereign . . us—in virtue of royal authority which we are bound to obey.

28—29. Put . . . . entreaty—convert your wish into a command instead of an entreaty.

30. Bent—willingness.

35—36. I beseech you . . . . son—the queen is most anxious that they should do what good they can to her son.

38. Practices—the obvious sense is *activities*, but there is the unconscious sense of plots. Dramatic irony

42. Still—always Thou . . . . news—you have always brought good news

48. Have I, my lord—Polonius is very pleased with the compliment.

44—45. I hold my duty . . . king—he means that he has as solemn a duty to the king as to God—his duty to God as regards his soul and his loyalty to the king making no difference to him.

47-48 This brain do—my intelligence does not so surely follow and manage the policy of the state as it has been used to do till now

50. O speak . . . hear—note the king's eagerness to have the problem satisfactorily solved

52 Fruit—desert or banquet in the Elizabethan sense.

53 Grace—(1) honour, (2) short prayer before or after meals, in reference to the 'heaven' above

55. The head distemper—the root cause of your son's trouble

56-57. I doubt marriage—The king supports that it is his father's death which has unsettled Hamlet's mind. The queen rightly thinks that it is his father's death and her own overhasty marriage that have unsettled Hamlet's mind

58. Sift him—examine him closely

61 Upon our first—on our first audience Suppress—put down and disband

62 His nephew's levies—the troops collected by his nephew.

63. Polack—Polk. Collective use

64 Better look'd into—more carefully examined.

66-67. That so his sickness . . . hand—that in this manner his sickness, infirmities of age and helplessness have been taken advantage of—Arrests—(1) order of arrest; (2) officers to make arrest

69. In fine—finally

71. Give . . . majesty—make use of the army against you

73 Annual fee—yearly allowance

74 Commission—authority.

77. Quiet pass—free passage

78 This enterprise—expedition against Poland

79-80. On such regards . . . down—on such terms as may be safely granted; "terms securing the safety of the country, and regulating the passage of the troops throughout it" Likes—pleases

83. Well took labour—services performed with success.

84. At night . . . together—feasts on any and every occasion are a regular feature of Claudius' court

86 Expostulate—discuss

89. Were nothing . . . time—would be a sheer waste of time

90. Brevity . . . wit—the essential characteristic of wit or intelligence is to state things briefly. Not brevity, but prolixity is the characteristic of Polonius. Unconscious dramatic irony here.

91. Tediousness . . . flourishes—prolixity is the unnecessary expanding of a theme—wasting too many words on it. As brevity is the soul of wit, so tediousness is the body and physical movement of wit. Flourishes—(1) movements, (2) ostentatious embellishments.

95. More matter . . . art—the queen gets impatient and begs Polonius to put more substance into his speech and make a less display of his 'wit'

97-98. That true—Polonius can never be cured of his prolixity. A foolish figure—a figure of speech which is stupid. Polonius has sense enough to realise his stupidity of speech.

99. Farewell it—let me have nothing more to do with it

100. The cause of this effect—madness is the effect, and Polonius is going to find out the cause. He says that he will 'use no art'

102. This defect—madness is the deficiency of reason

103. This effect defective—this effect which is a defect (deficiency of reason), must have a cause

105. Perpend—consider.

106. Have . . . mine—she will continue to be my daughter until she is married off.

111. Ill phrase—a badly chosen term or expression.

115. Stay awhile—have a little patience.

120. Ill at these numbers—not skilled in versifying

121. Not art . . . groans—N B Shakespeare's fling at Elizabethan love poetry in which the groans of love were recorded, analysed and numbered, e.g. the Elizabethan sonnets.

124. Machine—body.

125. In obedience—as a dutiful daughter

126. Solicitings—requests for interviews. Polonius, with his foul imaginings, might suggest also immoral proposals (the likely meaning of *solicitings*).

127. Fell out—occurred By means—Polonius may mean letters and presents by which Hamlet sought interviews with his daughter

132. This hot . . wing—this impetuous love in progress. There might be the association of winged Cupid.

136. Played . . .table book—hall served as a silent and active intermediary between them, like a desk which is a receptacle for letters or a memorandum book in which they might write.

137 Given .. .winking—connived at what was going on Mute and dumb—being a silent witness of their love, and taking no step

138 Looked .. sight—taken no serious notice of it.

140 Bespeak—address

131 Out of thy star—beyond your own sphere. The idea is that Hamlet was born under the influence of a star which places him far above Ophelia.

142 This must not be—I cannot let this go on Prescripts—instructions

143 That she should .. .resort—that she should not let him see her

144 Tokens—love gifts

145 Which done—these instructions being given. She . . . advice—she followed my advice.

146 Repulsed—being denied access. A short .... make—to be brief

148 Watch—keeping awake (at night)

149 Lightness—light headedness. Declension—descending steps

150 Raves—talks incoherently

151 Do you . . this—The King cannot swallow it; he has doubts. He is shrewd enough to see that Hamlet is harbouring some deep design in his mind.

153-155 Hath there been . . . otherwise—can you mention any occasion when what I have affirmed to be a fact, has proved otherwise?

156. Take thi, . . . otherwise—Polonius touches his head and shoulder and says that his head may be cut off from his shoulder, if what he states as a fact, proves to be otherwise

159. Centre—i. e. the centre of the earth. How may . . .  
 ... further—how may we further test it and bring it to a  
 definite issue?

162 I'll loose my daughter to him—It has been pointed  
 out above that Polonius uses words and phrases of vulgar  
 associat on

"The 'loose') reminds the King and queen that he has  
 restrained Ophelia from communication with Hamlet"—  
*Dowden* J D Wilson points out that " it has also another  
 meaning, still connected with the breeding of horses and  
 cattle, which would not be missed by an Elizabethan audience  
 and of which Shakespeare makes use again in *The Tempest*  
 when the cynic Sebastian sneers at Alonso because he would  
 not marry his daughter to a European prince, but rather loose  
 her to an African.

"And that some shade of this meaning was in the mind  
 of Polonius is strongly supported by the reference to 'a form  
 and carters' that follow according to Shakespeare's usual  
 practice of sustained metaphor. Nor does the chain of signi-  
 ficance cease there; for when Hamlet calls Polonius a 'fi-h-  
 monger' in line 174, that is to say, a bawd or pander, and  
 when he goes on immediately after words to compare his daugh-  
 ter to 'carrion' flesh and to speak of her 'conception,' the  
 words are clearly related to those of Polonius just before and  
 are indeed hardly intelligible without them. In short, 'loose,'  
 'fishmonger,' and 'carrion' are so linked together as to make  
 it impossible for me, at any any rate to escape the  
 conclusion that Shakespeare intended Hamlet to overhear  
 Polonius' unhappy jest."

163. Arras—tapestry. }

164. Encounter—meeting between Hamlet and Ophelia.

165. And be not . . . . thereon—and has become mad  
 out of love.

166. Let me .... state—let me resign my office as  
 your minister.

167. Keep ... carters—be a farmer or cultivator.

169. Sadly—seriously. The poor wretch—expresses the  
 mother's compassion and affection Board—accost

172. God a-mercy—may God have mercy!

174, *Fishmonger*—interpreted as hand—Dowden quotes Barab's Rich's *Herodotus*—"Such arrant honest women are fish for everyman (i. e. harlots)"

176 So honest a man—Hamlet implies that Polonius is less honest than a fishmonger.

181 182 The sun breed .. carrion—the sun produces corruption in the dead body of a dog, which is good to be kissed by the sun Maggot .. worm—like larva of an insect

184 Let . . sun—lest the sun corrupt her

185 How say . . that—what do you think of that? These words are addressed to the audience

185-186 Still . . daughter—he cannot help thinking of my daughter.

187 He gone—he is too much in love, or his sense is too much tainted

188 In my youth . . love—when I was young, I experienced too much the pangs of love. It may be doubted whether Polonius was ever capable of a grand passion. He might wish to laugh love to scorn. We may compare Touchstone's remark in *As You Like It* II. IV. 43-46 "I remember when I was in love, I broke my sword upon a stone and bid him take that for coming a-night to Jane Smile, and I remember the kissing of her beetle and the cow's dugs that her pretty chap's hands had milked." Very near this—I came very near the same blank and despondent state as Hamlet's

190 Words .. words—there is sense in Hamlet's careless and casual remarks. After all what we read is nothing but words, and words have sometimes little meaning behind them

191. Matter—substance Between who—between whom

193 Satirical rogue—it might be the Roman satirist, Juvenal, or the Italian Giordano Bruno, but it is more likely to be Lyly, for in *Eupheus* whenever old men give good advice to the young, they appear "with hoary hair and watery eyes. *Eupheus* also rejects an old gentleman whose moralizing he regards as the envy of decrepit age for lusty youth and whose intellect as tottering as the legs of an old man

195 Purging—discharging Amber—resin. Purging gum—watery discharge from the eyes of an old man

196 They have wit—they are fools.

197 Hams—thighs and buttocks.

199. Hold honesty—do not consider it decent.

200—201. You backward—you should like to be as young as myself if you could go back in years like a crab.

202—203 Though this be madness in't—his madness does not imply total negation of sense and reason. Though he is mad, sometimes he talks sense.

203—204 Will air—J D Wilson points out that fresh air was thought bad for an invalid, so Polonius is politely suggesting that Hamlet is not quite himself. Compare "*Dame* What, suiting sweet heart, are you not well. For the love's sake sweet heart, come in out of the air—Jonson. *Every Man in his Humour* Into my grave—where else can he walk than into his grave if he is to keep out of the air.

205 Pregnant—full of meaning Happiness—felicity of expression

205—07. How pregnant . . . delivered of—*Expl* If Polonius is convinced of Hamlet's madness, he believes that there is method in his madness—that he is not totally void of sense and reason. When he suggests to Hamlet that he should walk out of the air, Hamlet replies, "Into my grave?" This appears to be a very sensible remark to Polonius. He finds that a madman can sometimes make a very sensible and well-world remark which is beyond the reach of a man in possession of his reason and sanity.

212—213. You can not . . . without—Hamlet means that nothing pleases him better than Polonius' taking leave of him. Except my life—"This repetition strikes me as most admirable"—*Coleridge*

N B—In one of his soliloquies Hamlet contemplates suicide. It need not be argued that he is really in love with death. A scholar with his sensitiveness to beauty, with his delicacy of feeling and imagination, he must have felt that living is a thing of joy, but circumstances have altered every thing—his uncle's crime and his mother's incest have disgusted him with life.

217 God save you—a form of greeting.

222. My excellent good friends—it has been noted above that Hamlet does not like to be treated with deference by his friends, as being heir to the throne, and insists on equal terms



of friendship His first greeting to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is quite cordial, but he soon discovers their motive.

224 Indifferent—average.

2.6, On Fortune's Cap button—we do not hold the highest place in fortune's favour. The button is at the top of the cap.

227, Nor shoe—Hamlet pays them in their own coin Hamlet too talks in metaphors like them

232, Doom day—the last judgement day Thee . . . . near—if the world has grown honest, it must be in fear of the judgement day drawing near

233 Let particular—let me question you in detail. Hamlet is going to put them through a test.

234, Confines,—places of confinement.

242-243, For there is nothing . . . so—good and bad are relative Compare!

The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heaven of hell, a Hell of Heaven.

*Paradise Lost*—I. 114—25.

It is pointed out that Shakespeare is indebted to Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essays* "If that which we call evil and torment be neither torment nor evil, but that our fancy only gives it that quality, it is in us to change it."

245, Your ambition one—Denmark is too small to satisfy your ambition, therefore you say it is a prison

248-250 O God dreams—let me be put into a nutshell, and I can think that I am a lord of boundless space, but the trouble is that I have been lately afflicted by bad dreams

250-251, The very substance . . . dream—the very stuff of ambition is mere shadow

252 A dream shadow—a dream is but the shadow of a reality.

253-254, Of so airy . . . quality—so unsubstantial in character.

255-256 Then our beggars . . . shadows—then beggars (because they have no ambition) are all substance, and kings and heroes are but the shadows of beggars. "If ambition is but a shadow, something beyond ambition must be the substance from which it is thrown If ambition, represented

by a king, is a shadow, the antitype of ambition, represented by a beggar, must be the opposite of shadow, that is the substance"—*Bucknill*

256-257. Shall we .. .. reason—Hamlet is quite tired of word chopping with his two friends and suggests that they should better go to the court where such word-chopping is in fashion, Fay—faith.

258. No such matter—a hint that Hamlet does not desire their company. Sort—class.

261. I am .. .. attended—he may allude to the troubles of his mind. He might also hint that he was watched by spies In the beaten.....friendship—if I may speak as a friend.

264 Beggar .. .. thanks—this is again taken by the two friends as a hint that he has been deprived of the throne.

265. My thanks . . . half penny—i. e. a little too precious to be squandered. Inclining—inclination

267-268 Deal . . . use—tell me the truth.

270 Why .. .. purpose—you can say anything, but you must tell the truth.

271. There . . . . looks—your face betrays the truth.

272. Which . . . colour—which you have not learnt hypocrisy enough to conceal.

273 To what end—for what purpose?

275. That.... me—so that you may make a cat'spaw of me. Conjure—beseech.

276. Consonancy—harmony.

277. Obligation .... love—claim of friendship.

278. A better proposer—a more skilled advocate.

279. Be even .. .. me—deal with me fairly and straight forwardly

280-281. What . . . you—Rosencrantz consults Guildenstern. I have . . . you—I am watching you.

283. Hold not off—do not keep the truth from me.

285. My anticipation—my telling you beforehand why the king and queen have sent for you.

286 Prevent .. . . discovery—come before your disclosing the fact

287-287. Your secrecy . . . feather—you betray no secret of the king (and so you will not be guilty of betraying your secret agreement with the king)

287-289. I have of late . . . disposition—Hamlet is now talking like a sane man, and analyses his distemper with an air of seriousness so that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern may be just mystified. Forgone—abandoned. All custom of exercises—my daily exercises. If . . . disposition—I am so troubled in spirit

290 That this goodly frame, the earth, etc.—*N. B.* Hamlet speaks here with the delicacy and sensitiveness of a scholar, he seems to have pondered on the painful riddles of the earth and here expresses the quintessence of pessimism which may seem like a poem. Frame—structure Sterile—barren Sterile promontory—so Macbeth speaks of the earth

292 Brave—fine, Fretted—adorned

293. Golden fires—sun

294 A foul vapours—a composition of the most unwholesome vapours and mists.

294-295 What a piece reason—*N. B.* Hamlet is a typical Renaissance scholar. He is noted for his sensitiveness to beauty—beauty of body and beauty of mind, and mostly the beauty of the intellect. This is essentially a Renaissance tract—this passionate love of beauty, and to this is added also sense of the nothingness of human glory and achievement. So Hamlet concludes, what is this quintessence of dust? Piece of work—i. e. masterpiece.

295-96 How infinite faculties—this is a Renaissance idea—the boundless improvement of human reason and intellect. Form—bodily form Express—well-formed

297 Apprehension—understanding.

292 What . . . dust—this nothingness of man is a constantly recurring thought in the writings of the period.

309-301 Though by your smiling . . . so—though your smile seems to say that man delights me not, but a woman does. They have been told that Hamlet's madness springs from love

302 There thoughts—there was no such idea in our minds

305 Lenten—meagre Lent is the season of fasting and repentance, and so Lenten meal must be very inadequate. Entertainment—welcome

307. Coted—encountered.

308. To . . . service—to entertain you.

409. He that plays . . . welcome—Hamlet glances at stock characters on the stage.

410. Adventurous knight—the knight who goes out in search of adventures,

311. His foil and target—a blunt sword and a shield. They are used in stage fights, frequent in Elizabethan drama. The lover . . . in vain—because he will be finally united with his mistress.

312. The humorous man—the man who personated fantastic characters, and who for the most part was represented as capricious and quarrelsome. End . . . peace—will not be allowed to carry his quarrel too far.

313. Tickle o' the sere—easily move to laughter. Sere—lever of a gun, lock, a stop catch.

314. This lady—the boy actor who plays the female parts.

314—315. The lady . . . for't—"the lady, of course, will have indecent words to utter, if she omits then, the halting blank verse betrays her delicacy"—*Dowden*. "The lady shall say her mind, even, if she has to say more than he set down for her, and so spoils, the blank verse". *E K Chambers*

317. The tragedians of the city—'generally taken as a topical reference. If so more appropriate to the Lord Admiral's men, with its famous tragic player, Edwards Alleyn and Marlowe than to Shakespeare's who at this date had made their reputation in comedy, rather than in tragedy'—*J. D. Wilson*.

318. How chances . . . travel—how does it happen that that they appear to be strolling players?

319. Their residence . . . ways—once they were well-established in fame and income, and used to play in the city.

320—321. Their inhibition . . . innovation—inhibition is an order restraining the theatrical performances of a particular company from taking place in London. Various such orders were issued at different times during the struggle between the theatrical or court and the anti theatrical or city parties. 'Innovation' is the introduction of boy-actors, or new practice of introducing polemical matter on the stage or 'the new moral Puritan party' . . .

"But we are helped to a better explanation by the fuller knowledge of the history of the Globe company, which is due chiefly to Mr Fleay. In 1601 the company was on disgrace at court owing to the share they had taken in the conspiracy of Essex and Southempton. A performance of *Richard II.* had been given by them to encourage the conspirators. For the only time during a long period of years they were not invited to take part in the Christmas festivities. Probably they travelled during the autumn, they seem to have been at Aberdun in October and at Cambridge, about the same date; and if so, this is most likely the 'travelling' alluded to in the play. Then 'inhibition' will be the refusal of permission to act at court, and the 'innovation, the political innovation or conspiracy which led to it"—*E. K. Chambers.*

322 Hold . . . estimation—enjoy the same favour.

325 Rusty—state

326-327. Their endeavour . . . pace—there is no slackening in their endeavour to please the public. An eyrie of children—'eyrie' means a brood of nestlings, properly an eagle's nest. Eyases—unfledged hawks. An eyrie . . . eyases—"it was just at this time that the children of the Chaplain Royal were acting at the Blackfriars. They took a prominent part in the stage controversy known as the war of the theatres' and amongst other plays they produced between 1597 and 1605, Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*, and his *Poetaster*, satirical plays are full of attacks on rival poets and players and answering well to the description given in the text. Moreover, the Q 1 phrase, the 'humours of children', seems to point to Jonson's fondness for painting 'humours or comic types. Witness the titles of his earlier plays, *Every Man in his Humour*, and *Every Man out of his Humour*. If the allusion has been correctly identified, *Hamlet* may be the play in which Shakespeare 'put down' Ben Jonson"—*E. K. Chambers*

328 Cry . . . question—(1) cry out in a high childish treble, (2) cry out on the burning question of the day.

329 Clapped for't—applauded for it.

330. Berattle—abuses. The common stage—the public theatres

331 Many wearing rapiers—Elizabethan gallants. Goose-quills—writers. Many wearing . . . goose-quills—i. e.

Elizabethan gallants were afraid of being satirized and held up to ridicule by play wrights.

332. Dare . . . — . . . thither—will hardly go to the public theatres.

335. Escoted—maintained. Quality—profession of actors

335 336 Will they . . . sing—will they give up the profession of actors when they have lost their voice? N B. Boy actors were in high favour because they sang better in their treble. When they would grow up, their voices would break, and they would not be appreciated as actors, i. e. they will share the fate of professional actors.

337 If their means . . . better—: i. e. if they have no independent means and if they have to follow the profession of actors. N B. In those days professional actors were looked down upon. Shakespeare seems to allude to it in sonnet CXI.

O, for my sake do you with Fortune chide,  
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,  
Than public means which public manners breeds,  
Then comes it that my name receives a brand.

Their writers—the writers for boy actors, Jonson being one of them.

338. Do . . . wrong—mislead them To make . . . succession—to cause them to fall foul of the professional actors, i. e. to fight against their own interest, for they, when they grow up, will be in their position

339. There has . . . both sides—they are both to blame.

340 The nation . . . controversy—the countrymen take pleasure in exciting them into dispute Tarre—incite

342 No money . . . argument—: i. e. no manager of a theatre world buy any play which did not contain some reference to the controversy. Argument—plot of a play.

343 Went . . . question—debated the matter. The poet the dramatist who wrote for the boy actor. Player—he professional player.

345. Throwing about of brains—verbal contest between rival poets and players.

346 Do . . . away—do the boy-actors win?

347 Hercules and his load—reference to the Globe theatre, the sign of which was a figure of Hercules carrying the world.

349. Mows—grimages.

351. Picture in little—immature portrait 'Sblood—a contraction of God's blood, in reference to the crucifixion of Christ

351—352. There is something out—again and again Hamlet's mind is carried from a particular instance of evil to the contemplation of the age. The dominant thought in his mind is that the time is out of joint; he cannot otherwise account for the foul murder of his father and the incest of his mother

358—356 The appurtenance . . . ceremony—welcome expresses itself in some form of ceremony Appurtenance—accompaniment Let me garb—let me welcome you in this manner. Extent—entertainment.

357 Show fairly outward—be more ceremonial.

359—367 But my uncle father deceived—Hamlet reminds them that he has not forgotten the purpose for which they are with him He implies that they have failed to measure his mental state.

362—363 I am but mad handsaw—Hamlet means that he is occasionally mad. Once it was believed that prevailing winds affected people suffering from mental derangement

"One of Hamlet's pregnant quibbles. 'Handsaw' is generally taken as a corruption of 'heronshaw' (=her on). More over, 'hawk' like 'handsaw' is the name of a workman's tool, while the expression was doubtless proverbial and is actually included (in slightly different form) in Ray's *Proverbs*—Mr. J A Barlow, then of the Ministry of Labour first suggested that to me privately in March, 1924, and interpreted 'hawk' as plasterer's mortarboard, still in every day use under that name Dowden, I find anticipates this suggestion, and offers as alternative 'hawk' or 'pack' an Elizabethan word meaning a heavy cutting tool of the mattock or pick-axe type . . . which both in weight and manner of operation would form a more appropriate contrast to the light neat-cutting 'handsaw' Anyhow, we need not hesitate to take Hamlet's words as meaning on the surface 'I am only mad on one point, in other respects I have wit enough to tell chalk from cheese. But as usual he has a second purport' which R'sencraniz and Guldenstern are not

intended to catch 'Handsaw' is not a corruption of 'bernsaw' but it is certainly a quibble upon it since the whole passage (as all have noted) can be readily understood in terms of falconry, Hawking at herons was a favourite sport, and a north wind driving the two birds towards the south, & e. into the sun, would make it difficult to distinguish between them at distance despite their difference in size. Thus Hamlet also implies that he has 'an eye of' his seeming friends and knows them to be birds of prey"—J. D. Wilson.

364. Well you—a form of greeting.

366—367. That great baby swaddling clouts—Hamlet points to Polonius, who looks comical in his costume or figure. Swaddling clouts—a roll of cloth in which a baby was wrapped up as soon as born.

368. Happily—perhaps He's . . . to them—he is in his second childhood

375. Roscius—a celebrated Roman actor and a friend of Cicero.

377. Buz, buz—an interjection to pull up any one who begins to tell a story already known

379. Then cause . . . ass—i.e. Polonius' honour is an ass then. It is a line from an old ballad, now lost, and it made to quibble with Polonius' words—'upon my honour.'

381. Pastoral—drama dealing with shepherd life artificial and conventional. As you like It is partly a pastoral drama.

382. Tragical. pastoral—drama of mixed character in which tragic, comic, historical and pastoral elements came together.

383. Scene indivisible—a play in which the unity of place is observed, while 'poem unlimited' stands for a romantic drama in which the unities of time and place are openly flouted.

383—384. Seneca .. light—Seneca (C 4 B. C.—A. D 65) was a Roman tragedian who came much into favour in the days of the Renaissance and Plautus (C. 251—184 B. C.) was a Roman comedian. Their plays were frequently acted at the universities in the days of Shakespeare. Seneca exercised considerable influence on the development of English tragedies. Hamlet shows the traces of Senecan influence. The law of write—refers to plays which observe the three unities. The liberty—i.e. plays which have nothing to do with classical



unities. These men—those are the only players who can do with both classical and romantic plays

386—387. O Jephthah thou—Hamlet recalls an old ballad on Jephthah, one of the judges of Israel, he won a complete victory over the Ammonites at Rabbah Ammon. He had vowed to God that if he attains success, he would sacrifice the first thing he met on his return, and it proved to be his own daughter.

389—391 One fair daughter . . well—quoted from the first stanza of the ballad.

I read that many year agoe,  
When Jophu, judge of Israel,  
Had one fair daughter and no more  
Whom he loved so passing well.

392 Still . . daughter—Polonius thinks that Hamlet's thought are running on his daughter (Ophelia)

396 That follows not—Hamlet means the lines of the ballad from which he has quoted.

399 As by lot, God wot—Hamlet quotes again from the ballad.

As by lot God wot  
It came to pass most like it was,  
Great wares there should be  
And who should be the cheefe, but he, but he.

Chanson—verse. Abridgment—that which cuts short my remarks

406 Valanced—fringed with a beard. Beard me—i. e. encounter me. Hamlet quibbles.

407 My young lady and mistress—a player who acted the part of lady.

408 By'r lady—a wild oath referring to the Virgin Mary. Is nearer to heaven—is taller The idea is that the boy who played the part of a lady is growing too tall for his cast

409. Attitude—height. Chopine—a kind of high cork-shoe

410 A piece of uncurrent gold—a gold coin which is not accepted as current. Cracked . . ring—refers to the change of voice in the period of adolescence which means, that the boy will no more be able to play the part of a young lady. N.B. The coin of the time had a ring encircling the sover-

eign's head If a crack extended within the ring, the coin was unfit for currency.

411 Master—gentlemen E'en to't—start away at once.

412 French falconers—"It was the fashion of our ancestors to sneer at the French as falconers. They did not regard the rigours of the game, but condescended to any quarry that came in their way"

41 . Taste—sample. Quality—profession

418—419 Caviare to the general—not to the taste of the public *Caviare* was a Russian condiment made from the roe of sturgeon, first introduced into England in Elizabeth's time, and considered a great delicacy. One had to acquire a taste for it.

419—420 Whose judgments mine—whose opinion not only supported mine, but was even more excellent. Digested—arranged.

421. Modesty—moderation. Cunning—skill.

423 Sallets—salads of savoury herbs; hence spicy remarks Matter—substance.

425. Indict—accuse.

426 Affection—afflictation.

427. Honest—not wanton.

428. Much . fine—a distinction between real excellence and artificial grace Aeneas' tale to Dido—Shakespeare had in mind *Dido Queen of Carthage*, a play left unfinished by Marlowe and completed by Nash.

N B (1) The speech which is recited below, might have been written by Shakespeare as parody of Marlowe and Nash. (2) It might have been so written to present a contrast between the style of earlier dramatists and that of *Hamlet*. (3) Shakespeare might be quoting from a play of his own, written in rivalry to Marlowe's J. D. Wilson's view is: "The materials are too scanty to admit of dogmatism; but I tentatively suggest as an alternative that the two Dido plays were really two stages of the same play-book, the play performed in 1598 being a revision, perhaps by Chapman or Drayton of the 1594 text .. and that Shakespeare who had admired this performance with reservations, set out to show that he could better its type and criticize it at the same time. I have no doubt at all that the speech is Shakespeare's."

431. The rugged Pyrrhus—taken from Virgil's *Aeneid* Pyrrhus was the son of Achilles and Deidamia. The Hyrcanian beast—tiger. Hyrcania was a district on the south and south east of the Caspian Sea, and was believed to be infested with tigers

435 Couched—crouching like a wild beast, ready to spring on its prey. Ominous horse—the fatal wooden horse, the inside filled with Greek soldiers, which the Trojans were persuaded to take within the walls of their city, and proved their doom.

437 Heraldry—armorial bearing; used figuratively

438 Gules—blood-red A heraldic term Trick'd—a heraldic term, it means a description in drawing, while *blazon* means a description in words.

440 Impasted—made into a paste

442. Roasted fire—a glow with indignation and the heat of fire

443 O'er sized—covered with size, a kind of glue. Caagulate—clotted. Gore—blood.

444 Carbuncles—red precious stones

445. Priam—King of Troy

447 'Fore God—a contracted oath—before God.

448 Good discretion—sound judgement.

450 Striking .ureeks—missing the Greeks, though striking at them. Antic—(1) ancient; (2) grotesque

451 Rebellious to his arm—refusing to obey his weak arm.

452 Repugnant to command—unwilling to obey Unequal match'd—fighting with one stronger than himself

454 With the whiff sword—compare.

Which he, disdaining, whisked his sword about,

And with the wind thereof a King fell down—

Marlowe. *Dido*, II

Fell—cruel

455 Senseless—without feeling Ilium—Troy.

457. Stoops . base—comes crashing down

458. Takes prisoner—assails. Declining—falling. Milky—white as milk.

461. Painted tyrant—a tyrant in a picture, holding an up-lifted sword that does not descend.

462. A neutral . . matter—one unable to carry out his will and purpose. Matter—business on hand.  
 463. Rack—a mass of clouds.  
 466. The bold . . speechless—there being a hush in the air. The orb below—the earth  
 468. Region—sky,  
 470. Cyclops—single eyed huge monsters, traditional workmen of Vulcan's smithy.  
 471. Mars—the god. of war. For proof eterne—to last forever 'Proof' means the resisting power of the armour  
 473. Remorse—pity.  
 474. Synod—an assembly of gods.  
 475. Fellies—the run of a wheel. Fortune is represented as blind folded and turning a wheel, "to signify that she is turning, and inconstant, and mutability and variation"  
 477. As low . . fiends—; e. down to hell  
 479. It shall . . barber's—it is as long as your beard, and needs to be trimmed by a barber.  
 480. Jig—a farcical composition in rhyme, sometimes in the form of a dialogue of the lowest kind, in which the clown took part He's . . tale—he can appreciate only a jug or a bawdy tale  
 482. Mobled—muffled.  
 485. Threatening the flames—defying the fire  
 486. Bisson rheum—blinding tears. Clout—a piece of rag.  
 487. For a robe—in place of the royal robe.  
 488. O'er-teemed—exhausted by child bearing. According to legend Hecuba bore fifty sons and fifty daughters.  
 489. In the earlier . . up—picked up when she was rushing out in panic  
 490. In venom steep'd—dipped in poison.  
 491. 'Gainst pronounced—would have accused fortune of treason.  
 493 494. Pyrrhas . . limbs—Pyrrhas with wanton, mischievous delight hacking her husband to pieces  
 495. Burst of clamour—air-splitting shout of woe.  
 496. Unless things mortal . . . all—Shakespeare seems to allude to the Epicurean view of indifference of the gods to human suffering—; e. pitiless—human woes.  
 Nature or natural fit

497-498 Would .. .. gods—would have drawn tears from the eyes of heaven and filled the gods with grief. Passion—grief.

501. Bestowed—lodged.

502-503 They time—they record the things of the time and reflect the spirit of the age

504-506 After your death live—it would be better for you to have a bad inscription on your tomb after your death than the saure of the players against you while you are alive

507. Desert—merit.

508. Bodykins—dear little body Much better—you should use them much better than they deserve

509. Who should .. whipping—if everybody is used according to his desert, then there is none who should not be whipped It should be noted that whipping was the punishment for a professional fool for his indiscretion or impudence

510 Use them .. dignity—treat them as a man of honour and dignity should.

510-511. The less .. bounty—if you treat them better than they deserve, you show more of your kindness.

518 Study—a technical term for getting up a part.

518-59. Which .. in't—Hamlet is going to compose these lines and incorporate into the play.

529. Mock him not—do not make sport of him.

524 God be wi ye—good bye.

526 Peasant slave—according to the feudal tenure the peasant was a serf of the soil.

527. Monstrous—extraordinary.

528. In a fiction .. passion—r e in representing a fictitious emotion and a fictitious character

529. Force conceit—work himself to the height of the passion.

530 From her .. want'd—his face turned pale as his soul was wrought by the fictitious passion

531. Distraction in aspect—agitation in his look.

532. His whole function—the working of his faculties.

532-33 Suing .. conceit—corresponding to the changing phases of his emotion. .. .. he worked

himself up into this profound agitation for Hecuba could mean nothing to him

535. What's Hecuba .. Hecuba—Hecuba is a fictitious character, created by Homer The player wept for her, yet Hecuba was nobody to him.

537. Had he . . passion—if he had the same incentive. Cue—the last word of an actor as a signal for another to begin speaking or enter.

538 Drown . tears—weep a flood of tears.

539. Cleave the general . speech — startle the audience with the most frightful speech.

540. Make . . . fro—drive the guilty to madness and the innocent to horror.

541 Confound the ignorant—fill the minds of the ignorant with confusion.

541. Muddy mettled — dull-spirited. Peak — play the sneak.

545 John a-dreams—John the dreamer Unpregnant of my cause—listless to the motive of my action

547 Property—everything that he possessed.

548 Defeat—destruction.

549 Pate—head. Who calls .... across—if nobody calls him a villain or breaks his head, he feels that he suffers all the humiliation of such a treatment.

550. Plucks . beard—; e the shame and outrage he suffers because his uncle has seduced his mother and dispossessed him of his throne

551. Tweaks—twists Give . throat—charge me with the damnedst lie This was the worst kind of insult one could offer to another

553 'Swounds—a contraction of God's wounds in reference to the crucifixion of Christ. I should it—I must submit to all this insult

554. Pigeon liver'd—pigeons and doves were supposed to be without gall; hence they are meek and gentle.

555 To make . . bitter—to wreak dire revenge. Or ere—before

556 Region kites—kites of the air,

557. With . offal—with the corpse of this villain.

558 Remorseless prodless Lecherous—lustful Kindless—devoid of nature or natural feeling.

- 550 Brave—fine
553. Prompted . . . bell—called upon to take vengeance by the powers of heaven and hell. *N.B.* Hamlet has still doubt that the ghost he has seen, might be an evil spirit. The ghost is the power of hell, and his conscience (the voice of God within him) in the power of heaven.
- 553 Unpack . . . words—relieve my heart by making idle speeches
- 564 Drab—harlot.
- 565 Scullian—a kitchen maid.
- 565 About, my brain—let my brain work
- 568 By .. scene—as the result of the dramatists skill shown in the scene.
569. Struck . . . soul—so profoundly moved.
570. They . . . malefactions—they have disclosed their crimes
- 571—572 For murder .. organ—murder cannot speak but murder will reveal itself by the most unsuspected and wonderful manner.
- 575 I'll tent . . . quick—I will probe him to the depth of his soul. Blench—turn pale.
- 576 I know my course—I see my action clear—viz. revenge.
- 576—578 The spirit .... shape—The doubt returns again to Hamlet, and the doubt about the *bona fides* of the ghost holds him off—and delays his revenge, and if that is true, Hamlet should not have reproached himself as he does in this soliloquy. The tone of the soliloquy proves that he is getting impatient to have his revenge
579. Weakness—i.e. weakness in believing the ghost's story.
- 580 As he is . . . such spirits—as he can have great influence; upon a weak and melancholy man.
- 581 Abuse . . . me—mislead me till I endanger my soul by following his suggestion.
- 58 . Relative—definite. Than this—than the ghost's story.
583. Catch . . . king—find out whether the king is guilty or not.

## ACT III

## SCENE I

**Analysis.**—The king asks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern whether they have been able to find anything out of Hamlet. They have not been able to do so. Hamlet confesses that he has lost his mind's peace, but he keeps silent about the real cause of it. It strikes Guildenstern as a crafty madness with which Hamlet holds himself aloof. But there is one good sign, as Hamlet showed some delight on being told of the players. In fact, there is a performance that very night, and Polonius tells the king that he and the queen have been invited by Hamlet to see it. The king is glad to hear that Hamlet is inclined to pleasure.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern now take their leave. The queen is also begged to retire. It has been planned that Ophelia should meet Hamlet as if by accident, and the king and Polonius will watch them hidden behind the arras. The queen wishes that Hamlet's wildness be caused by the beauty of Ophelia so that her virtues may be able to restore him to his former sanity.

Polonius gives a book to Ophelia and asks her to pretend to read it as she walks in the lobby. He remarks that with devotion "a visage and pious action we do sugar o'er the devil himself". This casual remark of Polonius upsets the king and he muses at it.

Now enters Hamlet. In a soliloque he discusses the problem of being or not being alive in rather an abstract fashion. What should a suffering man do? Should he patiently bear his sorrows and misfortunes or put an end to his misery, by ending his own life? If death had been like sleep, and like sleep could bring peace to the tortured soul, then it is to be devoutly wished. But if that sleep bring disturbing dreams along in its wake, it is perhaps better to wait, get reconciled to life's sorrows. But for this consideration no man would have cared to stand the ill-treatment of the world, the wrong done by the oppressor, the haughty behaviour of the proud man, the bitterness of scorned love, the law's delay, the rudeness of the authority and the insult and dishonour which the patient have to face. But the dread of some thing unknown holds back a man from suicide and



he is obliged to carry one wretched and miserable existence. Who knows things would not be worse after death? It is this consciousness that makes us cowards and many a time the original resolve is weakened and discarded on reflection and great tasks abandoned

Hamlet then notices Ophelia, and begs her to include him in her prayers. Ophelia asks him to take back the gifts he had given her, but Hamlet denies that he had ever given her anything. These gifts have ceased to have any value for Ophelia as Hamlet no longer cares for her. Hamlet asks her if she is dishonest and fair. If she is honest and fair, her honesty should guard her beauty, for beauty has a greater power on honesty and can transform it sooner than honesty can translate beauty to its own likeness. He admits that he once loved Ophelia, but she should not have believed him. He tells her to go to a nunnery. He himself is indifferently honest, but he can accuse himself of so many vices that he wishes his mother had not borne him. A fellow like him is not worthy of living on this earth. She should go to a nunnery. He wants to know where her father is. Let him play the fool in his own house. Marriage will be unsafe for Ophelia, so he bids her go to a nunnery. Hamlet cannot stand the idea of the painted faces of women. They are affected and artful, and excuse their wantonness by their ignorance. He is disgusted with them. He does not want any more marriages and those who are married already, all but one shall live. He bids her to go to a nunnery and then abruptly leaves Ophelia. Ophelia realises that Hamlet has truly lost all his sanity. Once he was the best soldier, the best courtier, the best scholar. He was the mould of fashion and form. And now his reason like sweet bells jingled, is out of tune and harsh, and she is the most dejected and wretched of all ladies.

The king and Polonius re-enter. The king does not believe it to be madness. There must be some secret sorrow on which Hamlet is brooding. Later it may cause danger to the state. So he immediately decides to send him over to England, where the different surroundings may restore him. Dr. Polonius will think that it is due to neglected love. The king agrees to his proposal that the queen should see Hamlet all alone, and Polonius shall watch the interview from behind.

the arras. If the queen fails to find out the real reason of his wildness, let him be sent either to England or any other befitting place.

**Critical Note** What stands out most in the whole scene is the arranged meeting of Hamlet with Ophelia, and the soliloquy uttered by Hamlet. Much cannot however, be made out of the soliloquy as it has little bearing on the action of the play, nor does it throw any light on Hamlet's character. It is more or less a generalised reflection on human suffering. Hamlet's analytical and speculative mind naturally seeks refuge in a world of abstraction. According to some critics the soliloquy is misplaced. In the first Quarto, the soliloquy occurs in the second scene of the second act, immediately after Polonius has put forward his plan of watching Hamlet and Ophelia together. Also it is not clear whether Hamlet really contemplates suicide or the risk of being killed in carrying out the task of revenge.

Any way, through his conversation with Ophelia, Hamlet succeeds in conveying the impression of a distracted mind. Actually it was a show of one-track mind with a touch of extreme bitterness, which rouses the suspicion of the king. Some critics are puzzled by Hamlet's behaviour. His former love for Ophelia seems to have been completely dismissed from his heart while he meditates on revenge. But why should he be so coarse and harsh in his speech with Ophelia? The answer may be, that Hamlet's coarseness of language is just a garb of his assumed madness. Ophelia notices how changed Hamlet is from his former self.

His harshness of behaviour may also be attributed to his awareness of Polonius' dirty trick. It has been presumed that Hamlet either overhears Polonius or sees through the whole game, when he sees Ophelia pretending to read a book. He must have felt that Ophelia is being used as a decoy. It has been noted above that Hamlet has a deep hatred of insincerity. He may not have blamed Ophelia directly for it but he resented the fact of her playing into the hands of her father and the king. It is true Ophelia should not have allowed herself to be used in a dirty game. But she was too innocent to perceive it, and too obedient to obey her father. She could have played a far more wholesome part in Hamlet's life, if she had a little more personality, will, and character.

## NOTES

- 1 By no drift of circumstances—by no roundabout means  
 2 Get from him . confession—discover the cause of his wild behaviour  
 2—3 Grating lunacy—filling all his days with the discord of violence and madness. Grating—breaking in upon All his days of quiet— all his days which should have been passed in peace, and calmness Turbulent—violent. Dangerous—perilous to the state  
 6 But from what cause . speak—but he cannot be made to discuss the trouble he was suffering from  
 7 Forward—ready Sounded—pumped  
 8 Crafty madness—it reminds of Polonius' comment that there is method in Hamlet's madness Keeps aloof—does not show any interest  
 9—10 When we would state—when we wanted him to come out with the true cause of his trouble.  
 11 With much position—in a strained manner.  
 12—13 Niggard of question .reply—(1) not interested in asking questions but ready to answer them ; (2) reserved in speech, though free in answering our questions'. 'Question' sometimes means conversation in Shakespeare. Note that this is a false report which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern give of their interview with Hamlet. They wish to conceal the fact that they have failed in their mission as Hamlet at once saw through them They seek to impress the king and queen with what little they have got. Of our demands—with regard to our questions  
 14—15. Assay pastime—'ry to persuade his mind to take any diversion  
 16 Fell out—happened  
 17. Or ought—overtook  
 19 They are court—they are somewhere in the place.  
 24 With all my heart—most gladly.  
 25—27 Give him .delights—sharpen his desire for pleasure  
 29. Closely—secretly.  
 31 Affront—face.  
 32 Espials—spies

33. Bestow ourselves—takes such a position Seeing, unseen—We shall see both Hamlet and Ophelia, but we shall not be seen ourselves

35 By him—from his behaviour. As he . behaved—as he behaves.

36—37. If t be for—if it is the disappointment of love which he is suffering from, or not.

40—42. So shall I hope on us. If Hamlet's madness is caused by his love towards you, I wish your virtues bring him back to his former self, and you are both united in honourable marriage.

43. Ophelia here—Ophelia involves herself in this dirty game, N. B. It is not Hamlet's conduct but Ophelia that needs defence, but critics have overlooked her conduct. She may have been very innocent and ignorant, still she could have had an instinctive aversion to what is mean and dirty, as the proposal suggested by her father. The only explanation seems to be that her personality is entirely crushed by her bullying father and brother, which is evident from the little glimpse we get of her domestic life. And her natural timidity has been enhanced by loneliness and lack of outward friendship. Gracious—your majesty.

44. Read on this book—This excuse of Ophelia reading a book will be easily seen through by Hamlet.

45. Your loneliness—N. B. This is the key note of the play all through. The king is lonely in his foul crime, which he rarely breathes even to himself, Hamlet is lonely in his thought of revenge, the queen is lonely in her slavery to base passion; similarly Ophelia is lonely in her subjection to domestic tyranny.

47. With devotion's visage—with an air of sanctity.

48—49. Sugar himself—conceal the wickedness of our action as the bitterness of a pill is concealed in sugar-coating.

46—49. *Expln.* We are oft . . himself—This philosophic remark of Polonius is but casually uttered. But the remark makes the king wince as it drives straight into his heart and conscience. Polonius says. We are often open to censure when we hide our unholy purpose under the appearance of piety. Here Ophelia is apparently engaged in prayer

as evident from the word 'exercise', but the real purpose, as Polonius knows and as Ophelia also knows, is to entrap Hamlet. N B Granville Barker is not prepared to accept the view that Ophelia has been actually kneeling in prayer when Hamlet enters. "I think it most likely that Ophelia is meant to enter upon the inner stage and kneel at her foot stool (but she rises again at the sound of Hamlet's voice) and at about the cue 'lose the name of action'. It is just possible that she is kneeling there the whole time. But Polonius' 'walk you here' is against this, and more so the fact that her presence even so aloof, would distract our attention from the soliloquy." Oh, it is too true—Polonius' remark stings the king's conscience. Unaware Polonius treads on the wrong side of the king. He has been disguising his foul crime in fair words and gestures.

50. How smart a lash conscience—how does that remark whip up my conscience, N B Of all the villains of Shakespeare, Claudius is the most reticent about the crime. Here is the first gesture of remorse. Later on there is another hint and then there is no more. It has been pointed out how each of the principal characters is lonely. In fact each character seems to be living apart, in isolation from the other. There is only partial confidence between Hamlet and Horatio. It can be accounted for by the fact that Hamlet needed the sympathy of another very badly, and without it his loneliness would have driven him to actual madness.

51. Beautified . . . art—made beautiful with the help of cosmetics

52. To—compared to The thing . . .—it—the artificial means which helps to produce such beauty.

53 My deed . . . word—the foul crime in contrast with the fair words in which he conceals it—

49—54 *Expln* 'tis too true . . . burden—When Polonius remarks that by a display of pious appearance and pious actions we conceal our wicked purpose or sin, this remark hits the king and he flinches under a pricking conscience. This remark is too true, and applies to his own case. The harlot beautifies her cheek with powder and rouge. He covers up his villainous actions and purpose in fair words. Now the harlot's cheek is not more ugly when compared to the

artificial means which produces its beauty, than his deed compared to his fair words and gestures. Remorse seems to be preying hard upon his conscience. Note that the king is fully aware of the fact that he has succeeded in putting off the suspicion of his brother's murder by his smooth speech and gracious attitude. He is conscious of his own craftiness and subtility.

56. To be or not to be .. question—(1) The question referred to obviously is whether Hamlet will continue his existence or put an end to it. (2) He may also refer to the fact or otherwise of the continuity of the soul after death (an explanation, favoured by Johnson). (3) Hamlet may be thinking of the risk of death involved in carrying out the task of revenge. The most natural interpretation is that Hamlet is contemplating suicide, but as his thought proceeds, he seems to give an objectivity to his reflections.

57—60. Whether 'tis nobler .. them—which is the nobler course of life—to submit to the sorrows and sufferings of life, or to resist them by ending one's own life? Slings—the slings are put for the missiles they discharge. Take arms. troubles—"to take up arms and rush upon the waves of the sea was a custom attributed by several classical writers to the Celts. Shakespeare probably read of it in Fleming's translation of Aelian's *Histories* (1576, Bk. xii) where it is said that they throw themselves into the foamy floods with their swords drawn in their hands, and shaking their javelins as though they were of force and violence to withstand rough waves. By opposing end them—there is evidently the idea of opposing the troubles of life by suicide, so ending the troubles of life means also the ending of life itself. To die sleep—at first Hamlet thinks that death may be no more than eternal sleep.

61—64. And by sleep to say ..... wish'd if death meant no more than sleep, and if that sleep meant the eternal culmination of all the sorrows and sufferings that man is subject to, then it is the most desirable method to be followed. Nothing can be more piously wished for than such an end to our earthly existence. By a sleep—as a result of the peaceful and eternal slumber. To say—to be able to say. Heart ache—the anguish of the heart. The thousands.....

heir to—the innumerable troubles and vexations that our earthly existence is liable to be exposed to. Consumation—end

65 Perchance to dream—but suppose this sleep brings unhappy dreams Rub—difficulty A metaphor from the game of bowls, the *rubs* being the inequalities in the green which cause the bowl to be diverted from its course Ther's the rub—the dread of unknown a ter death prevents us from committing suicide

67 Shuffle coil—get rid of the chains of earthly cares 'Coil' is taken to mean turmoil; it is also explained as body, and is compared to "this muddy vesture of decay" in the *Merchant of Venice* "The body is conceived of as wound round the soul like a coil of rope"—(E K Chambers)

68 Give us pause—make us hesitate Respect—consideration

69 That makes . . . life—hat reconciles us to the suffering of a long-drawn life

70 Who would bear . . . time—no one would bear the indignities and ill usages of the world.

71 Contumely—insulting treatment or language.

72. The pangs . . . love—the anguish of refused love. The law's delay—the proverbial delay of the law court.

73, The insolence of office—haughty behaviour of an officer

74. That patient merit . . . unworthy—the suffering that a man of patience and merit gets at the hands of the unworthy.

75. Might . . . make—might fulfil his obligations. The Latin, *quietus est* (he is discharged) is the phrase, denoting the settlement of an account.

76, Bare bodkin—a mere dagger; not necessarily a naked dagger. Fardels—burdens.

77. To grant . . . life—to grown and toil under the burden of a long, drawn and tiresome life.

78 The dread . . . death—terror as to what may follow after death.

78—80 The undiscover'd country . . . returns—death is the undiscovered country from which no one returns N. B. Hamlet seems to overlook that his father's ghost return'd

from the land of the dead. But may be, as has been pointed out above that Hamlet has his doubts again in the honesty of the ghost. Bourn—boundary, limit.

81—82. Makes us rather ... of—makes us prefer the evils of the present life, to running into others after death of which we are ignorant.

83. Conscience—consciousness.

84 The native hue of resolution—the original colour of a determination.

85. Sicklied .... thought—weakened by reflection, resolution loses its original strength when it is subjected to brooding.

85. Enterprises ... serious and important undertakings, Pitch—a metaphor from hawking—it means the height of a hawk's flight Moment—importance.

87 With this regard—with this thought in mind. Their currents . . . awry—their course is diverted

88 Lose action—are never translated into action.

83—88. Explain. Thus conscience does make action—Hamlet goes on to explain why a man will shrink from escape by death and will rather stick to the ills of this life. He has a dread of something after death. Worse things may be waiting for him after death. It is this consciousness that holds him back to the ills of life. And it often happens that a purpose formed in a moment of passion, soon loses its value when it has to go through a pause of meditation—a consideration of pros and cons. Thus undertakings of great importance are left unfinished. N. B. These lines are an excellent example of self-criticism. It further proves that Hamlet is capable of taking a detached view of himself and his conduct in connection with his environments. Soft you now—Hamlet cuts short his meditation when he notices Ophelia.

89. The fair Ophelia—does this address convey anything like tenderness for Ophelia? Critics are of different opinions. Some critics suggest that Hamlet must have overheard Polonius when he entered. If so, he must have been already prepared to meet Ophelia, and knew what should be his behaviour. Others say that though Hamlet starts in an affectionate tone, when he perceives some movement behind



the arras, his manner and attitude change. But even without the assumption that Hamlet either overheard Polonius or perceived some movement behind the arras, it is quite likely that Hamlet scented something fishy as soon as he saw Ophelia in that pose. He was shrewd enough to guess that Polonius and the king must have been behind the changed attitude of Ophelia towards him. Naturally he does not like Ophelia being used as a decoy. A mind already embittered by shame at his mother's conduct, thus immediately turns cynical, in reaction.

89—'O. Nymph . . . remember'd—Hamlet is being sarcastic in addressing Ophelia as 'nymph'. While he requests Ophelia to pray for his sins, does he not vaguely hint that Ophelia should have a consciousness of her own guilt? Orisons—prayers

91 How does your honour . . . day—the artificiality of this question regarding Hamlet's health seems to mock Hamlet, and even Ophelia feels it

92 Well . . . well—the exclamation implies Hamlet's impatience and boredom.

93 Remembrances—gifts or tokens of love

94 That I have . . . re deliver—Hamlet at once realises that Ophelia must be following her father's instructions. Ophelia seems to value her love for Hamlet less than her father's unjust command.

96 I never . . . ought—Does it also imply that his past self is no more?

98 Word . . . . composed—words full of love and affection

99. As made . . . rich—as made the things more rich. Their perfume—the value of these gifts 'Perfume' is in connection with 'sweet breath' above

100—101 For to the noble mind . . . unkind—Hamlet's gifts have no meaning to her as Hamlet has ceased to care for her. This remark of Ophelia does not make any impression on Hamlet's mind.

103. Are you honest—the question points out the deep-rooted suspicion in Hamlet. He doubts the honesty of Ophelia's love for him which was so easily influenced by her father's foul intention. Here 'honest' also means 'virtuous'. He has lost all his faith in womankind by her mother's

conduct That is why he seems to be convinced that Ophelia must have as little virtue in her as his mother.

107—108 That if you . . . , beauty—If you are virtuous and beautiful, your virtue should look after your beauty and protect it from any outside approach Hamlet uses 'discourse' in the sense of a parley or invitation; but Ophelia takes it in the restricted sense of conversation.

109—110 Could beauty . . . , honesty—Ophelia asks if beauty had any better guide than honesty. Commerce—intercourse

111—113. The power of beauty . . . , likeness—beauty has a greater tendency to spoil the face of honesty than honesty can direct or control beauty. "Accepting her words he twists them back to his own meaning by declaring that Beauty can transform Virtue itself into an opportunity for gratification of lust He is thinking not only of Ophelia's behaviour but his mother's, as is clear from the talk of 'our old stock' that follows. —J D. Wilson.

114. Paradox—a contradictory statement. Now . . . —proof—just now it has been proved to be true. Either he has his mother in his mind, or he thinks of Ophelia consenting to be employed as a decoy. I did . . . once—his love is a thing of the past and does no longer exist He seems to imply that his experience of infidelity in woman has shattered his love.

116. You . . . me—a touch of softness in Hamlet when he says that Ophelia should not have believed him In his accusation of Ophelia, he also blames himself Hamlet does feel for Ophelia, innocent and misguided as she is.

117—19. Virtue . . . stock—virtue cannot infiltrate in and change our original nature. We shall . . . it—We cannot get rid of the original taint. Virtue . . . it—however virtue may be cultivated it cannot wipe away the taint of sin from human nature. N. B Hamlet thinks that his mother's sin must have stained him also. I loved you not—behind this simple statement there is a world of bitterness and disillusionment in Hamlet's own experience of woman, where even the feeling of motherhood is blackened by lechery. I was . . . deceived—here is what is called dramatic irony. These words would have been more aptly spoken by Hamlet.

121 Get thee to a nunnery—It is evident that Hamlet wants her to retire to a religious house, and breed no sinners like his mother. J. D. Wilson points out that 'nunnery' is a cant word for a house of ill fame and contends that Hamlet has this meaning in mind. But to us his opinion seems to be rather extreme. It is quite likely that his mother's sin has given him a perverse turn of mind and he cannot guide his thought through a normal channel. And J. D. Wilson's suggestion may be true in the sense that the less obvious meaning of 'nunnery' may just for a moment peep out of his sub-conscious mind.

122 Indifferent—fairly.

123—124 I could borne me—It should be noted that Hamlet accuses himself of vices that had been foreign to his nature. 'Hamlet brings general accusations against manhood and womanhood, but these particular vices are ironically named as those of which he has been suspected or calumniously accused: very proud he honours the poor Horatio, and hails the actor as a friend yet who is suspected of treating Ophelia lightly, as an inferior who may be basely used. revengeful, he who groans under the duty of revenge, yet who is doubtless suspected of revenge by the king, ambitious, he who would go back to Wittenberg, and could be contented in a nut shell yet whose disappointed ambition has been a subject for the probing of Rosencranz and Guildenstern.' —*Douden*. But critics could have taken note of another point, The terrible shock which his super-sensitive soul has to sustain makes him damn himself by all the narrable vices in the world. He seems to feel that his mother's sin and shame have defiled him as well.

125. At my beck—waiting to be performed

126. Thoughts in—These are the ways in which they can be expressed

128 Crawling heaven—(1) the image of a useless and loathsome worm creeping about on earth under the sky; (2) refers to Hamlet's inactivity in taking revenge for his father's murder.

129 Where's your father—Hamlet recovers slightly from his obsession and questions Ophelia about her father in order to test her.

131 At home, my lord—this conscious untruthfulness

gives away Ophelia completely.

132—133. Let the doors . . . house—Polonius' foolishness has sickened Hamlet, he wishes Polonius keeps it to himself and not interfere with any other affair. Farewell—It is too much for him to stand the falsehood of Polonius and his daughter at the same time.

134. O, help him . . . heavens—Ophelia would have given way under the blow.

135—36 If thou dost . . . dowry—If Ophelia marries, Hamlet has nothing more to offer her than this affliction.

137 Thou shalt . . . calumny—he draws the conclusion from his own condition. His own innocence and chastity have not helped him to escape the calumny at the hand of Polonius.

139. Monsters—horned cuckolds (husbands whose wives are faithless.)

139—40. Wise men know well . . . them—Hamlet is one of the wise men. His wisdom has been acquired by the knowledge how his mother betrayed his loving and affectionate father, and stained her son with her own shame.

142 I have heard of your paintings too—the use of powder and rouge by women to decorate themselves.

143—44 God has given you . . . another—the natural face is made to look artificial. You jig . . . and amble—Hamlet alludes to the affected gait of women.

Lisp—pretentious speech of women.

145 Nickname God's creatures—give pet names to men-folk which may have an indecent suggestion.

145—46 Make your wantonness . . . ignorance—excuse your immorality by affecting innocence.

Go to—an exclamation of impatience. I'll . . . on't—I will have no more to do with it.

146—47. It hath . . . mad—N. B. These few words contain a sad and bitter truth which is certainly missed by Ophelia. He is obsessed with the single idea of his mother's sin, which has partly driven him mad.

148—49. Those that are married already . . . they are—Hamlet utters this veiled threat as he perceives Polonius and his uncle behind the arras. All but one—all but his uncle.

150. O, what a noble mind . . . o'er thrown—nowhere else we get a better picture of Hamlet's noble mind, as from Ophelia's speech here

151 The courtier's . . . sword—the position of the words are changed due to Ophelia's intensity of passion. The 'eye' should go with the 'courtier', the 'tongue' with the scholar, and the 'sword' with the soldier. The Elizabethan ideal of the complete man—that is, the man of breeding, action, culture, a Philip Sidney, or a Raleigh—*Verity*.

152. The expectancy . . . state—the hope and the blossom of the kingdom

153 The glass of fashion—the reflection of good taste. The mould of form—the model by which others form themselves

154. The observed            observers—a person who drew the attention and notice of everybody. Quite. . . down—his mind is completely unbalanced.

155 Deject—dejected

156. That suck'd . . . vows—who glowed in his sweet and eloquent vows

158 Jangled—caused to make a harsh noise

159 Blown youth—you like a flower in full bloom.

160 Blasted            ecstasy—withered by wildness    Woe is me—'me' is ethic 'ative

162. Affections—inclinations. His affection. . . tend—his disposition does not show him to be love sick.

163. Though it lack'd            little—was a little incoherent

164—65 There's something            brood—he has some secret sorrow in his heart and his mind is constantly engaged in brooding over it.

166—67 And I do doubt . . . I am afraid when it is given vent to it will imperil the state. Disclose—the old word for 'hatching'. Prevent—anticipate.

168. In quick determination—taking a quick decision.

169 He shall . . . England—he shall be at once sent to England.

170 Our neglected tribute—the tribute that has been left unpaid.

171—75 Haply, the seas            himself—this is the reason to be given to the people of Denmark. The king means to say that a change of place and interest may banish the

secret sorrow of Hamlet. Variable objects—variety of things. Something settled—deep seated to some extent. His brains still beating—his thoughts being constantly active. Puts him . . . himself—makes him behave so unusually.

176 It shall . . . well—it will do him good.

178—79. How now.. said—N. B. It is Ophelia who is the most unhappy person in the scene. But after they have made her play the required role they dismiss her summarily. The king takes no notice of her.

180. To show his griefs—to reveal his sorrows Round—direct and straightforward.

184. I'll . . . placed—Polonius is always ready to eavesdrop. In the ear . . . conference—which will enable me to overhear their conversation. Find him not—do not discover the cause of his grievances.

182. Madness . . . unwatched go—madness in the heir to the throne cannot be neglected. The king's remark is ambiguous. What he really implies is that Hamlet's madness is detrimental to his own safety.

## SCENE II

*Analysis:* Hamlet instructs the players as regards the performance of the *Murder of Gonzago*. He has composed and inserted into the play some dozen lines or so, and he is very particular as to the effect to be produced. He would have no ranting or overdoing a part. Nor should it be too tame. The players are to remember that the true end of dramatic art is to hold the mirror up to nature. Hamlet has known players who imitate so vividly that they hardly seem human. He also insists that a clown should not speak more than is set down for him. With these instructions he dismisses the players.

Hamlet is now alone with Horatio. He praises Horatio for his stoical wisdom and indifference to the smiles and frowns of fortune—he is not a passion's slave; it is such a man that Hamlet admires. He begs Horatio to study carefully his uncle's looks during the play. If the speech, inserted by him into the play, does not perturb his uncle he will not believe the ghost.

Now enter the King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosen-  
crauz, and Guildenstern and others. The king is annoyed

by Hamlet's quibbling answer to his greeting. Hamlet starts chaffing Polonius. He asks Polonius whether he has played in the university, and Polonius says that he played Julius Caesar; then Hamlet remarks that it was a brute part of Brutus to kill so capital a calf. The queen invites Hamlet to sit by her. But Hamlet chooses to sit by Ophelia and begins to talk with a free wanton tongue which makes Ophelia feel embarrassed. He draws her attention to her mother's cheerfulness so soon after his father's death.

The *Murder of Gonzago* opens with a dumb-show, first showing the queen's tender affection for the king, and then the king's murder when he is asleep after the queen's withdrawal, followed by the lamentation of the queen and her wailing by the poisoner of her husband. First enters the Prologue, and the whole dumb-show is enacted in speech and action, and when Lucianus the king's nephew, pours poison into his ears, the king gets up, and the play is abandoned.

When Hamlet and Horatio are again together, they exchange notes. They are both convinced of the king's guilt. Now Rosencrantz and Guildenstern re-enter and inform Hamlet that the king is very much upset, and that the queen has sent for him. Hamlet talks in a quizzical way to them. They again try to pump him. Hamlet begs Guildenstern to play on the recorder and Guildenstern begs to be excused for his ignorance how to play. Hamlet points out that it is so easy to touch the stops and blow into the pipe with the mouth. But since he cannot do it—so easy a thing, how does he expect to pluck out the heart of his mystery? Now Polonius re-enters with the same message that the queen wants to see Hamlet. He dismisses all company; it is midnight, and he appears to have made up his mind on revenge, but he is determined to do no harm to his mother, remembering the ghost's injunction.

**Critical Note**—The dramatic criticism, put into Hamlet's mouth in this scene, is evidently Shakespeare's own. Here is an opportunity for Shakespeare to give his own critical comments on the general faults of acting in his own days; and it quite in place because Hamlet has got to instruct the players with a view to producing the most desirable effect of the performance.

Then there is a well-deserved tribute to Horatio. We see why Hamlet is attracted to Horatio; it is the attraction of unlikeness. Hamlet finds in Horatio what he lacks—balanced judgment and mastery of passion, which are a stoical virtue.

Hamlet has been blamed for his coarseness of speech to Ophelia when the play is going on. It should be remembered that Hamlet is playing up to his part. If he is mad, as it is assumed more or less by other characters, coarseness of speech sometimes appears in a mad man. Or it may be regarded just as an outlet for his bitter disillusion—his loss of faith in womankind, his loss of faith even in the goodness of human nature.

The play within the play is justified by the reason that Hamlet wants to make sure of his uncle's guilt. It has been noted above that his immediate impression of the ghost when he sees it is that it is his father's spirit. This impression fades away, as days pass and his old doubt returns. The play, as he believes, might give him the confirmation he needs as to the *bona fides* of the ghost.

The counter-movement has also begun. The king has already decided to send Hamlet to England where he is to be secretly put out of the way. The play also gives strength to the king's suspicion that Hamlet must be up to something. In either case, the play serves an important dramatic purpose. It precipitates the crisis. The king will have to act promptly and Hamlet too if he is to accomplish his revenge. More complications now arise, and the opportunity of revenge seems to be snatched out of Hamlet's hand, for he is soon packed off to England.

### NOTES

1. Speak the speech—some dozen lines or so that Hamlet has composed for the —*Murder of Gonzago*. By these lines he wants to prove the king's conscience. He is instructing players so that the effect of the speech may fully operate upon the king.

2. Trippingly—with natural ease and grace. Mouth-rant.

3. As many . . . do—ranting was a common vice of Elizabethan actors. Had as lief—would rather. To a crier—one who goes crying public notices.



4—5. Nor do not saw . . . hand—nor should you make any extravagant gesture. Thus—Hamlet demonstrates the extravagant gesture. Use all gently—Hamlet recommends moderation in speech and movement.

5—8. For in the very torrent smooth—you may be swept by a strong wave of passion, but you must exercise moderation and so you can acquire natural ease and freedom in giving expression to it. Whirlwind of passion—vehemence of passion. Temperance—moderation, poise or balance. It . . . soul—it is disgusting to me.

9 Robustious periwig pated fellow—"this I take to be a criticism of the acting of the Admiral's men and suspect Alleyn to be the robustious periwig-pated fellow. 1 Player as Lucianus commits all the faults here condemned"—J. D. Wilson Robustious—blustering. Periwig-pated—wearing a wig on the head. Tear a passion to tatters—rant.

10. Groundlings—occupants of the part of the theatre, corresponding to the modern pit. Generally called the yard, it was unroofed, and had no benches or seats, and so the spectators stood on the ground.

11—12 Capable . . . noise—i. e., capable of appreciating nothing but meaningless dumb shows and ranting speeches.

13 Termagant—Termagant, the supposed deity of the Muslims<sup>1</sup> and Herod, the slayer of the innocents, were staple characters in the old Miracle Plays. They used to rave and rant up and down the scaffold, uttering bombast of the most inflated and profane description. Outherods Herod—surpasses even Herod in ranting.

*Explanation 8—15* O, it offends me . . . avoid—In instructing the players, Hamlet begs them especially to avoid ranting or blustering. Moderation is all that he values. Hamlet has often seen a blustering, wig wearing fellow play most extravagantly and outrageously, a part of passion, and by shouting assail the ears of the lowest rank of spectators who are capable of being pleased by none but by meaningless dumb shows and maximum of noise. Hamlet cannot tolerate such a fellow. He should rather be whipped for beating Termagant and Herod, stock characters in the old Miracle plays, in ranting. He wants his players to avoid all this extravagance of speech and movement. Warrant—

16. Tame—lacking in spirit, lifeless.

17. Discretion—good sense Let .. tutor—trast to your good sense

17—18 Suit .. action—your speech and movement should harmonize with each other.

19. O'erstep .. nature—violate moderation.

19—20 For anything .. playing—for any passion over acted defeats the purpose of acting

21—22. To hold .. nature—to render or imitate nature faithfully 'Nature' means here both humanity and the visible world.

22—24. To show ... pressure—a faithful reproduction of life and nature is the business of an actor; he should show virtue and scorn what they really are in actual life, he should show society what its true image is. Pressure—impression.

24—25. Come tardy off—feebly represented

26 Make the judicious grieve—"the singular suggests reference to a special patron Southampton, who is known to have frequented plays assiduously in 1599, was in the Tower after February, 1601"—J D Wilson. The judicious—the sensible and wise among the speciators. Censure—judgement. A neutral sense in Shakespeare

27. Allowance—consideration. O'erweigh .. others counter-balance the opinion of the multitude

29. Profanely—the profanity consists in allusion to 'nature's journeymen' below.

30—31. Strutted and bellowed—walked with ridiculous dignity on the stage and roared. Nature's journeymen—inferior agents of nature.

28—34. O, these players .. abominably—there are players whom I have seen act and whom I have heard others praise most extravagantly. If I may be excused for speaking irreverently, I may say that these players do not speak like Christians, nor walk like Christians, nor resemble even the pagans (non christians) and if I must tell the truth, they are hardly normal human creatures. I have seen them so stamp on the stage and bluster that I have thought that not nature, but some inferior agents of nature have made them, and certainly not made them well because they imitate so badly human speech and manners.

35. Reformed that indifferently—corrected that defect fairly

38—39 Your clowns speak . . . them—Clowns on the Elizabethan stage often repeated lines or verses, composed by themselves, these were called *gags*. J. D. Wilson thinks that it is a glance at a particular clown who used very stale material. Collier suggests that the clown was William Kemp, who left Shakespeare's company in 1599.

39—40 There be of them . . . too—some of these clowns will invent jests of their own to amuse the ignorant spectators.

41—42 Some . . . play—some matter connected with the performance

43 Shows . . . it—proves the clown to be ambitious when he puts in lines or verses or jests of his own, not belonging to his part

52—53 Thou art . . . withal—you are even as upright a man as ever I came in contact with

54. O, my dear lord—Horatio protests against this praise

56—57 That no revenue . . . thee—who has no other income than his good spirits to maintain him

58—60 Let the candied tongue . . . fawning—a flatterer will speak honeyed words to a rich man, and bend his knees before him because he expects to gain something. Lick absurd pomp—*lick*, the dust off the feet of a rich man. 'Absurd' goes with 'lick', not with pomp. Crook—bend. Pregnant—ready, yielding. Thrift—gain. Fawning—crawling about the feet like a dog. N. B. 'The image is that of a spaniel at table, its tongue 'candied' with sweetmeats, yet 'fawning' for more."

61 My dear soul . . . choice—I am free to make my choice

62 Could . . . distinguish—could distinguish between bad and good men. Her election—the choice made by my soul

63 Seal'd . . . herself—put the stamp of approval on you

64 In suffering . . . nothing—*one* who makes light of suffering—a stoic who cultivates apathy, who does not let himself be affected by the joys and sorrows of life.

65—66. A man . . . thanks—one who makes no more of fortune's favours than of her frowns

66—69. Bless'd are those . . . . please—Hamlet admires the stoic ideal, embodied in Horatio. He is one in whom passion is under the control of reason, and who is not a plaything of fortune. Blood commingled—passion and judgement are balanced. They are. . . . .please—they are not the passive tools of circumstances such as may be compared to a musical instrument upon which fortune may play any time she pleases.

69—72. Give me . . . thee—Hamlet is attracted by the unlike in Horatio.

He lacks the poise and balance of Horatio's character, he is swayed by gusts of passion. Horatio's stoic indifference to the joys and sorrows of life and his stoic detachment excite Hamlet's deepest admiration. Something this—I have dilated too long upon it.

74—75 One scene of it . . . . .death—one scene of it seems to reproduce the circumstances in which my father met his death.

77. With . . . . soul—i. e. with a tense, concentrated attention.

78 Occulted—hidden.

79. Unkennel—reveal

80. It is a damned . . . . seen—then it must be an evil spirit that I have seen.

81—82. And my . . . smithy—I must have been harbouring vile thoughts in my mind. Vulcan's smithy—the forge of Vulcan, where thunderbolts for Jupiter were manufactured.

83. Rivet—fasten.

84. After—afterwards. We . . . . . join—we shall compare notes

85. In . . . . seeming—in judging the expressions of his face.

86—87 If he steal . . . . theft—if I miss any chance of expression in his face, let me pay the penalty.

88 Idle—crazy or mad

91—92 Of the chameleon's dish . . . . . so—Hamlet's first 'idle' speech is an elaborate quibble. He catches up 'fare' by the wrong end, to harp on the note of thwarted ambition (already sounded in the king's ears with 'I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious', III i, 125), by referring to the promise of the succession . . . . . For chameleon, cf. Two

Gent, II i. 164-5 .. 'Though the chameleon, love, can feed on the air,' and 2 Henry IV, I iii. 28 'Eating the air on promise of supply' 'Air' is a pun on 'heir' and 'promise crammed' leads on to 'capon', 'capon crammed' (i. e. stuffed like a capon) being a common expression for 'over-fed' . . . in 'capons' Hamlet hints that the king is plying him with empty promises in preparation for having him quietly removed from his path, since the word means the young cocks stuffed for killing. It also stands for a type of stupidity. 'Even capons', he says in effect, 'are not so stupid as to grow fat on air'.—*J. D. Wilson*

93 I have . . . this answer—it is an answer which does not befit you to give me.

95-96. My lord . . . say—Hamlet deliberately switches off his thought from the king, and addresses Polonius. Played university—in those days plays, English and Latin, were acted at Oxford and, Cambridge. Christ Church at Oxford and King's and St. John's at Cambridge were noted for the acting of student's. *Hamlet* itself was played at both universities.

100-101 I was . . . capitol—Caesar was murdered not in the capitol, but in the Curia Pometii in the Campus Martius. Shakespeare repeats this mistake in *Julius Caesar*.

102-103, It was a brute . . . there—Hamlet puns on Brutus and Capital. Brutus acted like a brute to kill Polonius, who is so capitol a calf.

104 They stay . . . patience—they wait upon your pleasure.

105 Here's metal . . . attractive—Here is a more attractive person, Hamlet means Ophelia. N. B. Hamlet sits by Ophelia, because from there he can better watch the king, and being at the same time under the eye of Polonius, can play off the antics of a mad lover.

108 Do you hear that—Polonius still nurses the belief that Hamlet is in love.

112. Hy, my lord . . . merry—Ophelia, in view of his madness, attributes his coarseness of language to a merry mood.

116 Jig maker—writer of doggerel verse.

116-119 What should . . . merry—a man has nothing else to do than be merry.

118. My father ... hours—Hamlet makes the remark so that it may be overheard by his mother.

119. It is ... months—it is four months since the king died

120. Let the devil... . black—I am not going to wear black any longer.

121. A suit of sables—a suit of clothes trimmed with expensive furs, brown in colour. It is generally worn by elderly gentlemen. There is a quibble on the meaning of 'sable', for it also means black. 'There is a connexion between 'so long' and 'sables'. Hamlet means 'What an age it is since my father died' 'I am quite an old gentleman'

122—123. Then there's hope . . year—there is a hope that a great man's memory may survive him half a year, since his father has been now two months dead, and yet he is remembered.

124. He must build churches—in order to be remembered after death one must endow the churches—one must be a pious benefactor.

124—126 Or else . . on—otherwise he has little chance of being remembered after death. Hobby horse—a celebrated figure in the rural May games and Morris dances. It is wooden horse, strapped round the waist of a man, whose feet were concealed by foot cloth. For O, for... . forgot—a line from an old ballad. It indicates that the hobby-horse was banished from May-day festivities by the opposition of the Puritans.

The dumb show—dumb-show on the English stage usually represented action, and purely allegorical moralizings on the action. The king seems to have missed the point of the dumb show, and was upset when it came to poisoning of the king, in the play. Halliwell writes, "If the king had seen the dumb show; he must have known that there was offence in it. Is it allowable to direct that the king and the queen should be whispering confidentially to each other during the dumb show, and so escape a sight of it?" Makes . . protestation—makes a demonstration of love. Declines—leans. Anon comes . . . exit—If the king had paid any attention to the dumb-show, he would have perceived the whole meaning of it at this point. Passionate action—show of grief. Mutes—hired mourners.

129 *Miching mallecho*—secret mischief; 'Mich' means to hide secretly out of the way as truants do from school; the word is still used in this sense in Ireland and some parts of England "Hamlet refers to the mischievous behaviour of the players in the surreptitiously interposing a dumb show which almost ruins his plot by prematurely disclosing the the Mouse-trap"—*J D Wilson*

130, *Belike*—perhaps. *Imports*—signifies. *Argument*—plot

133. Cannot keep counsel—give away the whole show

136. You are naught—you are mischievous Mark the play—instead of listening to you.

138 For us—as for us

139. *Stooping*. *clemency*—craving your indulgence

141. *Prologue*—a person who speaks a prologue—a sort of preface to a drama setting forth the action and apologising for the shortcomings *Posy of a ring*—motto inscribed inside a ring.

143. As woman's love—Hamlet never misses an opportunity of having a fling at woman

144. *Phoebus' cart*—the chariot of the sun-god.

145 *Neptune's salt wash*—Neptune is the sea-god in classical mythology *Tellus' orb'd ground*—the earth.

146. *Borrow'd sheen*—the borrowed light of the sun.

148 *Hymen*—the god of marriage

149. *Communtual*—i.e. mutual,

151 *Ere* . . . done—before our love be ended.

152 *Woe is me*—alas for me.

153 *So far*—so far removed *Cheer*—cheerfulness

154. *Distrust you*—are worried about you.

155 *Discomfort* . . . must—it should not upset you

156. *Holds quantity*—are proportioned to one another.

157. *in neither* . . . *extremity*—either love and fear do not exist or they are in extremes.

158 *What my love* . . . *know*—the extent of my love has been demonstrated to you by time.

159 *Sized*—of a particular magnitude.

160—161 *Where love* . . . *there*—great love converts little doubts into fears, and little fears grow in strength with growing love.

162. I must .. .. thee—I must take leave of you from this world.

164. Operant—active. *My operant* ... do—my senses and intellectual powers are failing

165—166 And haply . . . thou—perhaps you are going to have again a husband as loving and affectionate as myself. Confound the rest—stop what else you are going to say

167. Such love .. breast—a love that entertains the idea of such a husband, is disloyal to the first husband.

170. Wormwood—a bitter herb How it tastes bitter (to his mother) ?

171 Instances—motives That . . . move—that lead to a second marriage

172. Base . . love—mercenary motives, having nothing to do with love

175. I do believe . . . speak—I am prepared to believe that what you think now comes straight from your heart

176. But what we . . . break—but often we break the promise that we make in the heat of passion

177 Purpose memory—any resolution that we make is dependent on memory

178 Of violent . . . validity—being born under a strong and passionate impulse, but possessing little strength or durability.

181—184 Most necessary 'tis lose—it cannot be helped that we forget to fulfil the promise which we make in the heat of passion, for this promise melts away with our passion.

185.—186. The violence . . . destroy—in a moment of violent grief or violent joy we may make resolutions, but these resolutions pass away with our grief or joy

187. Where joy . . . revels—where joy exceeds all limits Grief lament—grief is most clamorous,

188 Grief grieves—grief is turned into joy, and joy into grief. On slender accident—on a slight occasion.

189. This world aye - this world cannot last forever.

190 Our loves . . . change—our love should depend on circumstances

191—2. For . . . love—it is still to be decided whether love is independent of, and governs fortune, or fortune governs love.



193 The great man . . . him—when a great man falls from his high state, those who enjoyed his favour and patronage, run away from him.

194. The poor . . . enemies—when a poor man becomes rich, his friends turn his enemies.

195 Hitherto.. .... tend—in these circumstances love depends on fortune.

196. Who needs . . . friend—he who does not need a friend, will have plenty of friends.

197—198 Who in want . . . enemy—he who in distress, turns to an insincere friend for help, at once makes him an enemy Seasons—temperers

200—201. Our wills . . . . overthrown—fate and individuals run counter to each other. And all that we will, is defeated

202, Our thoughts . . . own—we may will one thing, but in carrying it out, it turns out otherwise. There are circumstances over which we have no control, and they shape our action more or less Compare what Hamlet says later :

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,

Rough-hew them how we will

Hamlet's own action illustrates this He sets himself to the task of revenge, and it is postponed from day to day until accident fulfils it, involving the death of the innocent as well as the guilty The motive of the play seems to be worked in the sub play

204 But die . . . . dead—his noble resolution will fade away when your first husband is dead

205 Sport . . . night—let me be deprived of mirth and rest,

207. To desperation . . . hope—let me lose all hope and trust.

208 Anchor's cheer—the scant fare of an anchorite. Scope—limit.

209. Each . . . joy—each thing which is contrary to joy.

210 Meet . . . well—cross my good purpose

211 Both here . . . strife—both in this world and in the next may perpetual conflict torment me

215—16. My spirits . . . sleep—I am rather depressed, and let me seek relief in sleep.

217. Mischance—mischief.
218. The lady. . . much—the lady overswears herself.
221. Is there . . . in't—is there nothing offensive or objectionable in it?
225. Mouse trap—a trap to catch a mouse. Tropically—figuratively.
227. Image—representation.
229. A knavish . . . work—a mischievous play.
230. Free souls—souls free from guilt.
231. Let . . . wince—a proverbial expression. 'Jade' is an overworked horse, and 'galled' is hurt. Withers—the junction of the shoulder-bones of a horse, forming at the bottom of the neck a ridge, which is easily galled by the collar.
234. Chorus—the function of a chorus in Greek drama was to interpret the action of the play. Hamlet is interpreting the play, and so he is the chorus.
235. I could . . . love—I could interpret what was going on between you and your lover.
236. Puppets dallying—at an Elizabethan puppet show, an interpreter sat on the stage and explained the action to the audience.
237. Keen—sarcastic.
- 239—240. The croaking raven . . . revenge—the raven is a bird of ill omen. The lines seem to be suggested by the following from *The True Tragedy of Richard III*
- The screeking raven sits croaking for revenge  
Whole herds of beasts come bellowing for revenge.
242. Confederate—conspiring.
243. Midnight weeds—herbs collected at midnight are essential ingredients of witches's charms and potions.
244. Hecate's ban—the charm of Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft. Blasted—refers to the harmful effect of magic or enchantment.
245. Dire property—dreadful virtue.
246. On wholesome . . . immediately—the idea of replacing and so putting an end to warm life.
248. The story. . . extant—the story has not yet been traced.
252. False fire—a metaphor from the discharge of artillery loaded without ball.

253. How fares my lord—"The King had asked Hamlet the same question at the opening of the scene. The tables are turned" *J. D. Wilson*.

257. Let the stricken . . . weep—The King is the stricken deer, for his conscience has been proved by the action of the play, and his guilty thoughts have been brought to light. N B There was a belief that a deer when wounded went apart to weep.

261. A forest of feathers—plumes were worn by tragic actors in Shakespeare's time. Turk turn with me—turn false to me (like a Christian turning Turk). Provincial roses—rosettes of ribbon worn on the shoes to hide the laces and resembling a species of rose known in Elizabethan times as Provincial roses.

263. Razed—streaked in patterns. Stubbs describes these shoes as some of black velvet, some of white, some of red, some of green, razed, carved, cut, and stitched all over with silk. Fellowship—partnership. Cry—company. A metaphor from a pack of hounds.

251-64. Would not this . . . sir—*Expl*—The King suddenly gets up and leaves when the play has been going on, and the murder is done. It means then that the king has a guilty conscience, which the play brings to light. Hamlet believes that the lines, composed by him, and inserted into the play, have moved the king into betrayal of his guilt. He, therefore, rejoices to think that he might make a good player. All that he needed was to decorate himself with plumes like a tragic actor, and wear the rosettes of ribbon on his cork shoes, and so tricked out he could easily enter a theatrical company. It would be a good way of earning his bread, if other resources failed him.

265. Half a share—"A collection of papers of the year 1635, printed by Mr Halliwell-Phillips in his *Outlines of Life of Shakespeare* Vol. I. p. 312 throws much light on the eternal economy of the King's company. The profits were divided between the 'actors' and the 'housekeepers' or proprietors, some of whom were actors also witness the following extract, "that the house of Globe was formerly divided into six equal parts, whereof Mr Gilbert Burbidge and his sister had one, Mr. Condell and Mr. Heminges four. That

Mr Taylor and Mr. Lowen were long since admitted to purchase four parts between them from the rest, viz, one part from Mr. Hemings, two parts from Mrs. Condell, and half a part a piece from Mr. Burbidge and his sister."

*E. K. Chambers.*

267. *Damon dear*—the friendship of Damon and Pythias was proverbial in ancient times.

268. *Dismantled*—deprived.

269. *Jove*—Hamlet alludes to his own father.

270 *Pajock*—a corruption of peacock. The peacock typifies lechery as well as vanity, and therefore it is appropriately applied to the king.

272-273 *O good Horatio* . . . pound—The Mouse-trap as he calls the play, has brought the king's guilt to light. Hamlet can no longer have any reason to disbelieve the ghost. He is very much elated by the success of his plan.

277. *Recorders*—the recorder was a kind of flute or flageolet with a mouthpiece.

280 *Perdy*—a corruption of *Par Dieu* (by God).

282. *Vouchsafe* . . . you—please let me have a word with you.

283 *A whole history*—why a word, you may have a world of words with me.

286 *Marvellous distempered*—Guiltensteru means that the king has been very much upset. Hamlet takes 'distemper' in the sense of getting sick, so he says that the king should have better sent for a doctor.

288. *Choler*—anger.

289 *Your wisdom* . . . richer—you should have acted more sensibly.

291 *Purgation*—the word has both a legal and a medical sense—clearing from the imputation of guilt and purging of the body.

20291. *For me* . . . chokes—if I were to administer the remedy, it would make his distemper (*choler*) worse than it is.

292-293. *Put* . . . frame—talk sense. *Start* . . . affair—do not break away so incoherently from the point.

294. *Tame*—submissive.

295-96 *In* . . . spirit—in great distress of mind.

298-299. This courtesy . . . breed—this is not the kind of entertainment or behaviour we expect from you

300-301 Do . . . commandment deliver your mother's command to you

301-302 If not . . . business—if you do not make a sensible answer, I can only beg your pardon and return to your mother

305-305 My wit's diseased—I am crazy.

308 To the matter—out with your business.

310 Admiration—wonder

312-313 Is there no sequel . . . admiration—Is it all that my mother has been amazed by my behaviour? Is there nothing else to follow it?

317. Trade—business.

319 Pickers and stealers—Hamlet refers to his hands "Referring to 'keep my hands from picking and stealing' (church catechism), and intended to recall what follows viz, 'and my tongue from evil speaking, lying and slandering' which he imputes to them"—*J. D. Wilson*.

321-323. Bar the door . . . friend—court restrictions upon your freedom of movement if you do not disclose your troubles to your friend

324 Advancement—promotion.

324-3-5. How can . . . Denmark—Rosencrantz has been informed of the king's public declaration in council of Hamlet being heir to the throne.

3-6 While the grass grows—the proverb is while the grass grows the steed starves

327 Musty—stale

326-3-7. While the grass . . . musty—Hamlet means that while he is waiting for succession to the throne, he may die There is dramatic irony, while the grass is growing under Hamlet's feet, the king acts.

329. To cover the wind of me—a metaphor from hunting. To walk round to windward of the game so that it may break towards the net or toil Hamlet means the attempt of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to take him unawares, offguard

331-332 If my duty... .... unmannerly—(1) "if my behaviour seem a little bold you must set it down to the impetuosity of my affection"—*J. D. Wilson* (2) "You have

found me too bold in my duty to the king and queen; you will find me unmannerly if my love induces me to give you a truthful answer." (3) "my love to you has caused me to be rude in the discharge of my duty"

340. 'Tis .. . lying—Hamlet stands on no ceremony with Guildenstern, at least he gives him to unders and that his game is no secret to him. Vantages—holes.

341. Give it .. . . mouth—blow through it with your mouth.

342. Dis course .... —music—utter the sweetest notes.

344-345. But these .. . . harmony—I cannot bring any music out of these stops

346—47. Why look you .. me—you cannot play upon the pipe, and yet you presume that you can get the secret out of me

348—49. Pluck .. . mystery—lay bare and get hold of the secret that lies locked in my heart.

350. Compass—the musical scale

354. Fret—vex. A pun on 'fret', for it means also a piece of wire in a stringed instrument such as a lute or guitar, by which the fingering is guided.

355. Do you . . . yonder cloud—"Hamlet speaks in the royal palace, but also in the unlocalized Elizabethan theatre open to the sky, thus he can point upwards to a cloud or to 'this brave o'erhanging firmament' (II ii 304), and the audience is conscious of no incongruity"—J. D. Wilson

360. By the mass .. . indeed—like a typical, fawning courtier, Polonius seems to agree with whatever Hamlet may say.

366 They fool ... bent—"they compel me to play the fool till I can endure to do it no longer"—Johnson Bent—the extent to which a bow may be bent or a string wound up, degree of tension.

371 Witching—bewitching, full of enchantment.

372. Churchyards yawn—graves open and let out the ghosts.

373. Contagion—foul, pestilential air. Drink hot blood—commit murder.

375. Soft .. . mother—for the time being he suspends the thought of murder for he is going to see his mother.

376 O heart . . . nature—let not my heart lose its natural impulses and affection.

377. That soul of Nero—the Roman emperor, Nero, had his mother murdered.

378 Not unnatural—matricide would be an unnatural act

379. I will . . . none—I will speak most rudely to her, but use no physical violence My tongue . . . hypocrite—let my tongue give the lie to my soul. He has no murderous thought in his mind, but he is going to use the most violent language.

381 Shent—rebuked or put to shame

382 To give them . . . consent—let not my soul give confirmation to my violent words

### SCENE III

Analysis—The king has already decided to send Hamlet to England and bids Rosencrantz and Guildenstern accompany them. He tells them that it is not safe to let Hamlet range about freely in his madness. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are ready to obey the king's order. And they are going to get ready.

Polonius informs the king that Hamlet is going to see his mother in her private room, while he will place himself behind the arras and overhear their conversation and withdraws.

Then occurs the king's soliloquy in which he reviews his crime. It is the brother's murder with the primal eldest curse upon it. He cannot pray, for he has not put aside the effect of his crime. The use of prayer, is to prevent one from falling into sin, or to win God's forgiveness when one has sinned. But he cannot pray to be forgiven the crime of murder, when he enjoys all its benefit. He cannot pray for forgiveness when he has not given up his crown, his ambition, his queen. On earth justice can be bought off, but in heaven there is no escaping judgement. He can try his repentance, but it is so hard for him to repent. He bends down on his knees and prays.

Hamlet passes by at this moment. For a moment he feels like killing the king in the act of praying, but then he pauses to think whether it will be act of revenge. His uncle killed

his father in the full flush of his sin, and he does not know what expiation he has been doing now. Killed in such a moment, the king will go to heaven. The revenge is postponed till he gets drunk, or is asleep, or in his rage, or gambling, or swearing, or doing something that has nothing to do with saving his soul. So he hastens to his mother. The king rises, his prayer has been all in vain; it is mere words that he has uttered, and words without thoughts cannot go to heaven.

**Critical Note.**—The counter-movement has begun. The king is taking steps to send Hamlet to England. There is something more in that than appears at the moment. It is a plot to get rid of him. Here we have the single soliloquy of the king and it lets us see what is passing in his mind. He has kept too much to himself. He is all alone in his crime; even the queen does not suspect it. We do not know whether he has known any remorse. In his soliloquy he seems to be toying with the idea of repentance. He knows that so long as he keeps all the benefits of his crime, there is no sense in repentance.

It is when he is praying that Hamlet comes upon him, and might have easily dispatched him with a stroke of his sword, and so accomplished his revenge. But Hamlet's analytical and speculative tendency now intervenes, and the revenge is postponed. Schücking throws light on this point: "True-revenge can indeed only be taken according to the formula: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Only thus would he satisfy the ghost, whose bitter complaint seems to be still ringing in Hamlet's ears: the complaint that as the old king had been sent unprepared and 'unhousel'd' to his death, his spirit must now endure all the torments of purgatory. .... To send this murderer, therefore, to his death, at a moment so propitious for the welfare of his soul is not punishment enough. Hamlet, indeed, with characteristic exaggeration, almost persuades himself that to be overtaken by death, whilst at prayer, would be of actual benefit to the sinner, and therefore a betrayal of his treacherously murdered father. But in this he apparently overlooks what an opportunity he is letting slip. Devoid of any sense of reality, he accepts the extraordinary chance that has delivered his enemy into his hands as one that may readily recur and his fertile imagination



conjuges up a hundred more favourable moments when the king, ripe for judgment may be dispatched to hell. Thus he allows his one and only opportunity of accomplishing his bloody task to escape him. A moment later the king rises from his knees, unconscious of how near he has been to death.

"That the reasons given here by Hamlet for not carrying out his revenge are perfectly sincere and genuine can not be doubted. If the superstition of Elizabethan times, which accorded an immense significance to conduct at the moment of death, be taken into account, there is no cause for seeing in his own explanation any subjective grounds on the score of which Hamlet is merely excusing to himself his inability to act. It cannot be denied that Hamlet seems to us unbelievably inhuman when he rejects murder as not sufficient in itself. But it must not be forgotten that baroque exaggeration of the desire for vengeance had come to be a convention in the Elizabethan 'drama of revenge'. . . . Thus Hamlet is not intended to lose moral status by the savage instincts of which he has just given proof."

#### NOTES

1—2 Nor stands it.. range—nor is it safe to the state to let him move freely in his madness. Range—have free scope of action.

3 Commission—document giving them certain power.  
1. . . dispatch—the king is sending Rosencrantz and Guildenstern on an embassy to England.

5—7. The terms . . . lunacies—in my position as king I cannot let him move about freely, for every hour his madness is a threat to my safety. We . . . provide—we shall make ready to start.

9—10 To keep . . . majesty—to keep those safe whose lives and livelihood depend on your majesty's safety.

11 The single life—the private person who lives for himself as opposed to the king who lives for others.

12—13 With all his strength . . . annoyance—to keep self safe from all harm by all the devices and resources of the mind. Rosencrantz means that a private individual should do all he can by using all his mental energy and resources to keep his life safe from all harm, now if the life

of a private individual is of so much value to himself, the life of a king must be a thousand times more valuable.

13-15. But much more .. many—Rosencrantz simply repeats Guildenstern's thought. the king's life is entitled to be kept safe by all means because on him depends the safety of his state and his subjects. Cease of majesty—death of a king.

16. Dies not alone—involves the destruction of others.

17. Ma-sy—massive.

20 Mortised—fastened as a tenon in a mortise. The mortise is the hole in which the tenon fits

21. Annexment—adjunct Petty consequence—minor detail.

22. Attends . . . . ruin—accompanied the noisy destruction

22-23. Ne'er alone. groan—the king's sigh echoes the groan of the public

25. We will . . . fear—we will put restraint upon Hamlet Fear—object of fear.

28 Convey yourself—place yourself in concealment—To hear the process—to hear what goes on between mother and son. Tex him home—take him seriously to task

31 Audience—hearer.

32. Nature partial—a mother will be apt, to take a lenient view of her son's offence

33 Of vantage—from a position of advantage.

36. Rank—(1) full-blown; (2) evil smelling.

37 Primal .. upon't—Cain was the first murderer who murdered his brother Abel in a fit of jealousy, and a curse pronounced upon him by God was 'a fugitive and vagabond shalt thou be in the earth'

38. Pray... .. not—he cannot pray because he will not renounce the effects of sin.

39. Though .. will—though I have as great a desire to pray as I have the determination.

40. My stronger . . . intent—my guilt has a stronger hold upon me than my intention.

41. To double .. bound—torn by a conflict. 'Double business' in that he cannot part with the effects of his crime and he will pray for God's forgiveness.

42. I stand . . . begin—I hesitate which I should begin first. Should I begin by praying? Or should I begin by renouncing the effects of my crime?

44. Thicker—i.e. thicker with blood.

45. Rain—rain of mercy.

46—47. Where to . . . offence—what is the use of mercy if it cannot conquer the effects of sin?

48—50. And what's . . . down—what can there be in prayer if not its double function?—to warn us before we fall into sin, and to win God's forgiveness for us when we have sinned. Look up—look up to heaven.

51. My fault . . . past—my sin is a thing of the past, and I can now pray to God for forgiveness.

52. Serve my turn—suit my purpose.

53—54. I am still . . . murder—I have not yet renounced the effects of my crime.

55. Offence—the effect of the crime.

57. In the . . . world—in the corruption which is practised in the world.

58. Offence's . . . hand—i.e. a criminal bribing justice with gold. Shove . . . justice—escape legal punishment.

59—60. The wicked . . . law—the prize of wickedness. Justice is bought off with the profits of crime. 'Tis . . . above—things are different in heaven.

61. There is no shuffling—there is no escape from the effect of sin.

61—62. There the action . . . nature—in heaven the crime cannot be gilded over there is no buying off of justice.

62—63. We ourselves . . . evidence—we have to confess our sin and give evidence against ourselves to the minutest detail.

58—64. Offence's gilded hand . . . evidence—*Expl.* The king kneels down to pray and then he asks himself whether he has the right to pray, since he has not renounced the effects of his sin. So long as he enjoys his crown and his queen, obtained by his crime, how could he pray for God's forgiveness? On earth justice can be bought off by gold, it is different in heaven where one's crime lies exposed in its true nature, and cannot be gilded over; in heaven everyone has to confess his sin, and in spite of himself give evidence to the minutest detail. What rests—what remains for me to do?

65. What . . . not—anything can be done by repentance.

66 Yet . . . repent—but the trouble with me is that I cannot repent

67. O wretched state—his own state is miserable since he wants to repent, but he cannot repent for he is not willing to part with the fruits of his sin. Bosom . . . death—heart and soul darkened with crime

68. Limed soul—soul caught in the mesh of crime. The bird-lime is a kind of sticky substance which entangles the feet of a bird in a net Struggling free—caught in the mesh of sin the more it struggles to be free, the more it gets entangled.

69. Engaged—involved. Assay—attempt

70 Heart . . . steel—heart bound with strings of steel  
(i.e. hardened with crime)

71. Be soft . . . babe—be as pliant as the muscles of a new born baby.

72 All . . . well—G d may yet forgive me.

73 Now . . . pat—now I may accomplish my revenge in fitness of time

74 So he . . . heaven—if I kill him in the act of praying, I send him to heaven.

75. And so . . . scann'd—will it be a revenge or not? The point needs to be carefully examined

76. A villain . . . father—it was a villainous murder that he had committed, and I am going to kill him when he is praying; it cannot be revenge, for revenge means an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

79 This is hire and salary—"to deal with Clandius thus is to do him service which he might have hired and paid Hamlet to do him".

80. Grossly—in the full blossom of his sin. Full of bread compare *Ezekiel* xvi 49; "Pride, fullness of bread, an abundance of idleness."

81 Flush—full of vigour.

82. Audit—final reckoning.

83. In our circumstance . . . thought—according to our condition and course of thought as human beings.

84 'Tis . . . him—the account is heavily debited against him.

85. In the purging . . . soul—in the act of praying which purifies his soul from the effect of sin.

86. Season'd . . . passage—prepared by prayer for his passage to heaven

80—86. He took my father . . . passage—*Expl.* When the king prays, Hamlet had an opportunity of killing, but he pauses to think whether it will be revenge. He will be killed at the moment when prayer has purified his soul and so he goes to heaven. Claudius killed his father in the full blossom of his sin, and his father must be now in Purgatory. A man has to give an account of his life to God after his death. None knows how his father's account stands with God. In any case since he had no opportunity of confessing his sin before he died, his account with God must stand on the debit side, so far as the human mind can judge. Revenge means an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Hamlet argues that if he kills his uncle in the act of praying, that is to say, when he confesses his sin and releases his soul from the bonds of sin, he is best fitted to go to heaven after he has been killed.

88 Up, sword—he sheathes his sword. A more horrid hent—(1) a hold for a more horrible purpose, (2) a more terrible occasion to grasp again.

90 Gaming—gambling

91. That . . . in't—that has nothing to do with the saving of his soul

92 Trip him—the literal as well as the figurative sense: throw him by catching him at the legs and kill him. That his heel . . . heaven—so that he may fall forward with his heels kicking upwards; figuratively his soul may take its flight to hell

95. This physick . . . days—he spares him for the moment, but it does not mean that he is let off—it is just meant to prolong his misery

96 My words . . . below—King has prayed, but he has only spoken words which are meaningless because there has been no reformation of his life, as he is steeped in his sin still. It is a mere verbal prayer, and it cannot reach God N. B. This is the only opportunity that Hamlet gets of accomplishing his revenge and he lets it go by. Should

he be blamed for it? The reason for postponing the revenge may not satisfy some readers. It ought not to be forgotten here that revenge has still the old tribal notion of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

#### SCENE IV

**Analysis:** Polonius requests the queen to have it out with Hamlet without mincing words, and then hides behind the arras. Hamlet next enters. He straight way plunges into the matter, blaming his mother with incestuous marriage with her husband's brother. His mother is a bit frightened and wants to summon somebody to her help. Hamlet will not let her go, and tells her that he is going to lay bare her in most self. The queen cries for help, and Polonius repeats her cry from behind the arras. Hamlet draws his sword, and thrusts it through the arras, and Polonius is killed. The queen reproaches him for the rash and bloody deed. Hamlet reminds her of her marriage—"almost as bad, good mother, as kill a king, and marry with his brother". Taking no further notice of Polonius, Hamlet turns to his mother and proceeds to wring her heart, as he puts it.

He still speaks of her marriage. It is a deed that has outraged modesty, virtue and love. He holds before her eyes the portraits of the two brothers, drawing attention to the contrast between the dignity and majesty of his father and the inferior features of his uncle. He wonders how she with her eyes open, could have chosen the latter for husband after she had known the other. Passion could not have dictated her choice, for passion must have died out at her age. It must be fatuous lust that led her to err so grievously. The queen begs forgiveness of Hamlet. But Hamlet would not let her alone until he had exacted a promise from her that she would have nothing to do with his uncle whom he describes as a murderer and villain, a vice of kings, a cut purse of the empire.

The ghost, invisible and inaudible to the queen, makes his appearance. Hamlet has a startled look. The queen supposes that Hamlet gazes on vacancy and holds discourse "with the incorporal air". And she supposes that it must be the outbreak of his madness. Hamlet speaks to her like a man in full possession of sanity, and makes his mother feel his pulse which

beats normally. He bids her confess her sin and repent. If she is without virtue, let her assume it, and refrain from going to his uncle's bed. A day or two of such abstinence will make it easier to her. Then he takes leave of her. He warns her of the need of caution. He will not expect her to go back to the king, and for a few kisses and caresses divulge the whole secret to him. He tells his mother that he is being sent to England with his two school fellows, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, whom he will trust no more than fanged adders. He drags Polonius' body into the next room.

**Critical Note:** So long has Hamlet brooded over his mother's incest that now he must speak out, and the brutal frankness with which his mother's position is analysed, may disgust some critics, and is adduced as evidence of his mental aberration. But it is deliberately done by Hamlet. He assumes the guardianship of his mother's virtue. The queen, however, is not told of Claudius' crime, and it is to be noted too, that she was not a party to her husband's murder. Though in his vehement outburst Hamlet accuses her of murder, Hamlet does not throw any light on the murder of his father—it is to be disclosed in the last scene.

The ghost's reappearance is well timed. Hamlet's disbelief might have revived, and he would have made an excuse to postpone his revenge. Hamlet looks distraught when the ghost is there and speaks to him, though invisible and inaudible to his mother. It might very well be taken as an hallucination, to the mother it seems to be "the very coinage" of his brain. The point remains doubtful. It is true that the ghost's visit is a reality to Hamlet. The queen has little of imagination and sensibility, and may remain unconvinced.

The important interview between Hamlet and the Queen is one of the great scenes even in certain respects, the climax, of the play. And yet only its opening, the killing of Polonius, has any significance for the continuation of the action. It never comes to a real exchange of views, nor even—and this is the most extraordinary thing of all—to the enlightenment of the Queen in the matter of her husband's murder. For the Queen, in spite of all Hamlet's references to his uncle as a murderer, really does not seem to suspect the truth until

the very end of the play, for she never shows, in word or in deed, and especially in her relations with her husband, that she has drawn any such conclusion from what she has heard... ..

"But although this scene brings us no nearer to a full understanding of the plot itself, it throws much additional light upon the character of Hamlet. Nowhere more vividly than here does his typically self-absorbed attitude, and his lack of interest in what passes in the soul of another come out so clearly. Though he speaks as a father confessor, he has no desire at all to hear confessions. His insensibility is such that when the ghost calls on him to speak to his tormented mother, he can only utter the few cold and empty words: "How is it with you, lady?" This passionate interview can therefore hardly result in any closer relationship between himself and the sinner. In his opinion, she is unworthy even to carry out the traditional prerogative of a parent and to give the customary blessing to her children—she has, indeed, forfeited all her rights as a mother. For this reason Hamlet feels justified in describing her sexual life in a way that to us appears brutal, and that clearly shows what importance such matters have for him in his melancholy and unsettled state"—*Schnackig*

### Notes

1. Look . . . . him—talk roundly to him and spare none of his feelings.

2. Tell . . . with—let him know that he has gone too far with his wild disposition, that there should be a limit to every thing

3—4. That your grace ..... him—tell him that you have protected him from the displeasure of the king. Your grace—your ladyship. Much heat—displeasure on the part of the king. Sconce me—hide himself.

5. Round—outspoken

7. Fear me not—do not worry about my doing my duty.

9. Thou hast offended—The queen is doing her duty, with the virtuous indignation of a mother, she charges her son with having displeased his father.

10. You .... offended—Hamlet repeats the same charge against his mother. The queen can make nothing of his



attack because the circumstances of her husband's murder are unknown to her. But it is his mother's incestuous marriage that Hamlet denounces, and the queen is too dull of sense to realize it.

11 With an idle tongue—with levity

12. Go, go—a cry of impatience, disapproval.

13 Why, how now, Hamlet—the queen loses her patience at her son's insolence

15. Road—cross

16. Would . . . so—if it had not been so.

17. Set those . . . speak—dispute those who can enforce attention and obedience from you

18 Come . . . down—Hamlet might fling himself at his mother and force herself into the chair. It will be true to his wild and excited behaviour. Budge—in a

1920 See you . . . you—reflect as in a mirror his mother's guilt so that she may see the degradation of herself

23. A rat—Hamlet suppresses a rat moving behind the arras and thrusts his sword through. It might be the king after all, spying on him. Dead for a ducat—i.e., dead for a certainty. He is prepared to stake a ducat on the issue. Ducat—a gold coin of varying value.

29. As kill a king . . . brother—the mother cannot take the son seriously and because he appears to be very much excited.

39. 'T was my word—I meant what I said. In his impetuous haste he forgets that any explanation is necessary.

31. Intruding—O' meddlingome.

32. I took . . . better—I thought it was the king. Take thy fortune—you have met your fate for your meddlingness.

33. Thou find'st . . . danger—now you find how fatal it is to meddle in the affairs of others

34. Leave . . . hands—stop wringing of your hands (a gesture of grief). Peace—now he turns to his mother.

35. Wring your heart—turn your heart inside out. A quibble in 'wring' being very effective in a moment of emotional tension

36. If . . . stuff—if it be not impervious to impressions.

37-38. If damned . . . . . sense—if callousness of habit has not dulled and deadened it to any feeling Brass'd—hardened as brass; also the sense of being deadened to shame. Proof . . . sense—armed and fortified against feeling.

39-40. What have I done . . . use—what is my crime that you rage and fume at me in this rude manner.

41. Blurs . . . modesty—makes meaningless the blushes of a modest woman. Hamlet reads into the shameful act of his mother an outrage upon all womanhood. He has a habit of generalizing from particulars

42. Calls . . . hypocrite—discredits virtue as 'hypocrisy. Rose—the grace and ornament of an innocent love. The idea is that Gertrude's lust makes the purest love appear as a shameful thing

44. Set a blister there—Harlots were branded in the forehead. Compare, 'Tear the stained skin of my harlot-brow'  
—*Comedy of Errors*, II ii. 138

45. Dicers' oaths—oaths of gamblers.

46-47. Contracties—contract of marriage From . . . . . soul—makes the contract of marriage meaningless

48. A rhapsody of words—a string of empty, high sounding words. Glow—burn with shame

49 This solidity . . . mas.—the earth

50 Tristful visage—sad face. Doom—the day of judgement

51. Thought-sick—sick with anxiety

49-51. Yea, this solidity . . . act—For the idea of the whole universe being made to suffer for sin compare:

Earth trembled from her entrails, as again,  
In pangs, and nature gave a second groan,  
Sky louded, and, muttering thunder, some sad drops,  
Wept at completing of the mortal sin  
Original.

52 That roars . . . . . Index—which receives, in the very beginning such loud condemnation. Index—the index was originally placed at the beginning, not at the end of a book

53 Look here . . . this—It is supposed that Hamlet pulls out the miniature of his father, and snatches away that of his uncle from his mother's neck and stamps it under foot. Dover Wilson supposes them to be full size portraits to which Hamlet points.

54. Counterfit presentment—portrait.  
 56. Hyperion's—the sun god, Apollo. Front—forehead.  
 57. Mars—the god of war. To threaten and command—inspiring awe of majesty and obedience in others.  
 58. Station—bearing. Mercury—the messenger of the gods.  
 59. New-lighted—newly alighted. Heaven kissing hill—hill of a towering height.  
 60. A combination—a sum of grace, majesty and dignity of bearing. A form—a form to be admired  
 61. Set his seal—stamp his approval.  
 62. To give .... man—to present the true image and figure of a man to the world.  
 64. Your husband—your present husband. Mildew'd ear—a blade of corn that has been attacked by mildew. Mildew is a growth of minute fungi on plants  
 65. Blasting—infecting. Wholesome—in the full bloom of health.  
 66. This fair mountain—Hamlet points to the portrait of his father.  
 67. Batten—fatten. This moor—Hamlet means his uncle. "Probably quibble upon 'blacka moor' which to Elizabethans typified the physically repulsive"—*Dover Wilson*  
 69. The hey-day in the blood—the fever heat of passion. Tame—mild or subdued. Humble—non-exciting.  
 70. Waits ... judgement—is swayed by reason.  
 70-71. What judgement . . . this—you have not acted with your judgement in marrying this fellow, after having known my father  
 72. Motion—impulse.  
 73. Apoplexed—paralysed.  
 74-75. Now sense . . . difference—However sense be subjugated by madness, it will retain a little of discrimination which cannot fail to act in a matter like this such difference between my father and uncle. Ecstasy—madness. Thrall'd—subjected. Choice—discrimination. Such a difference—so great a contrast between the two  
 77. Cozen'd—cheated. Hoodman blind—the game known as blindman's buff.  
 79. Smelling—Hamlet evidently means that like a lower animal his mother has only the sense of smell.

Sans—without

81 Mope—be stupid.

82 Rebellious bell—i. e., passion which rebels against reason or judgement compare what Laertes says to Ophelia : "Youth to itself rebels, though none else near."

83. Mutine—mutiny Maïron's bones—dry and passion drained frame of a middle aged woman

84—85 To flaming youth . . . fire—to a young person in the full flush of passion, let virtue be just as wax, and melt in the fire of passion.

86. When the compulsive . . . charge—when the passionate impulse of youth assails virtue. *attack physically etc.*

87. Frost itself—passion in the matron's boxes must be as cold as frost

88. Reason.. . . will—reason procures the satisfaction of lust

82—88. Rebellious bell .. . will—*Expl.* Hamlet wonders how passion burns to fever heat in a middle-aged woman. If passion can set at nought reason or judgement in a middle-aged woman, a young person will certainly be excused for sacrificing virtue to passion. In a young person passion will naturally predominate and consume virtue in its heat. Let no shame be cast on a young person in whom virtue surrenders to passion. If it happens so, a young person should have sufficient excuse when desire or lust which has exhausted itself by gratification, and should have become icy cold, burns fiercely again in a middle-aged person and reason or judgement procures satisfaction of lust.

89. Thou turn'st . . . soul—you lay bare my inmost self to my scrutiny.

90. Grained—dyed in grain.

91. Tinct—tincture.

92. Stew'd in corruption—lapsed in sensuality. Honey-  
ing—talking fondly or sweetly.

93 Nasty sty—adulterous bed.

94 Like daggers—the queen unconsciously reacts to Hamlet's purpose and echoes Hamlet's words—"I will speak daggers to her, but use none."

96. Tithe—tenth part.

97. Precedent lord—former husband. Vice of Kings—

Vice was a character in the Moralities and developed into a clown. The Vice supplied the comic or burlesque element. The Vice and the Devil were stock characters in the Moralities, and it was the business of the Vice to belabour the Devil with a dagger of lath while the Devil shrieked, and at last ran away with the Devil clinging to his back. The Vice wore a long parti coloured coat, a vizor, and a cap with ass's ears; the Devil was dressed like a bear, had long talons and carried a club. A Vice of kings will mean the clown of a king.

98 A cut purse rule—one who murders the lawful king and usurps the throne

99 Diadem—crown

101 A king . . . patches . . . refers to the motely dress of a fool. Hamlet repeats the idea of a vice of kings.

103—104. Save .. guards—his father's ghost appears before him, though invisible to his mother. His doubt that it may be an evil spirit, seeking to have a hold on his soul, may still persist in his mind. He appeals to the angels to protect him. Your gracious figure—the ghost looks like the late king

105 Tardy—slow in spirit or action.

106 Lapsed . . . passion—(1) "having allowed both time and passion of revenge to slip by"—*E K Chambers*; (2) "sunk in delay and mere emotion"—*Verity*; (3) "Hitherto unexplained, because it has been forgotten that time in Shakespeare often means 'circumstance, the condition of the moment' . . . Further 'lapsed' . . . in the only other place Shakespeare uses it (*Twelfth Night* III iii 35) means 'arrested' or 'taken prisoner'." Thus Hamlet describes himself as, 'the prisoner of circumstance and passion' repeating 'passion's slave' of III. ii 70, and referring to those fits of morbid excitement which so often take possession of him."

—*Dover Wilson.*

107. Important—important.

110 What . . . purpose—sharpen your dulled spirit of revenge.

111 Amazement . . . sits—your mother is over-wrought with excitement and bewilderment

112 Step . . . soul—comfort her in her distracted state.

Note the ghost's solicitude for his queen. Her fighting soul—her reason, shaken by terror.

113 Conceit—imagination. In weakest bodies.....works—has a powerful hold on the frailest bodies.

114. How is it . . . lady—Hamlet, preoccupied with the non fulfilment of his task, with which the ghost has come to chide him, can pay but little heed to his mother's agitation. Lechery in Gertrude kills filial affection, but retains her husband's love—a problem for the psycho-analyst to settle.

116. Bend . . . vacancy—gaze on the empty air.

117. Incorporeal—bodiless Discourse—talk.

118 Forth . . . peep—you are staring wildly (the terror of your heart is expressed in your dismayed eyes)

119. In the alarm—when suddenly called to arms.

120. Bedded—lying flat, as in bed. Excrements—literally out growth therefore hair. Like . . . excrements—as if your hair were animated with life.

121. Stand an end—stand on end.

122. The heat . . . distemper—extreme agitation of the mind.

124. On him, on him—Hamlet is in a frenzy of excitement. How pale he glares—a picture in words.

125. Conjoin'd — combined Preaching to stones — addressing stones on behalf of the cause

126. Capable—i.e. capable of feeling and action.

127 Piteous action—appealing gaze of yours

127—128 Convert . . . effects—turn me from my stern purposes or actions

129. Colour—excuse or justification. Tears blood—It is my duty to shed blood, but I may be tempted by your piteous looks to shed tears.

130 Do . . . there—the ghost is invisible to Hamlet's mother. N. B. Bradley thinks that the ghost remains invisible to the queen in order to spare her. Another suggestion is that she is 'no longer worthy to look on his form.' Dover Wilson accepts this suggestion and writes, "I suggest that the 'piteous action' Hamlet speaks of is one of hands, outstretched in supplication to Gertrude and that the Ghost's agitation conveys, first his amazement that she cannot see or hear him, and then his horror as he realizes the cause. It is only after

she has declared herself completely insensible of his presence that he 'steals away' in shame

Gertrude dismisses the whole thing as an hallucination of her son.

131 Yet all that . . . I see—I see all that materially exists

132. No . . . ourselves—I heard ourselves talking.

134. Habit—dress

136. This . . . brain—it is an hallucination of yours. Coinage—invention.

137 Bodiless creation—immaterial vision ; hallucination. Ecstasy—madness.

138 Cunning—skilled

139. My pulse . . . time—my pulse beats as normally as yours, and I cannot be mad Temperately—in proper measure.

140 Healthful music—measured beats, which are a sign of sanity

141. 'Tis . . . uttered—I have not spoken like a madman.

142 I . . . re-word—I will repeat exactly all that I have said

142—143 Which . . . from—which a madman will be unable to perform and deviate from. Gambol—start away.

141—143. Bring . . . gambol from—N B. This is an infallible test Hamlet himself throws out the challenge So this finally ought to dispose of the much debated question whether Hamlet was mad For love of grace—if you care for the blessing of God

144. Flattering unction—fictitious comfort Lay..... soul—do not delude yourself with that false comfort.

145 Trespass—sin That not . . . speaks—that it is my madness, and not your sin, which impels me to speak

146 It . . . place—it will spread a coating over your moral sore Skin and film—cover with a thin membrane of skin. Ulcerous place—the festering sore.

147. Rank corruption—unchecked decomposition or deadening Mining all within—working its way underneath.

146—148. It will but skin unseen—the moral corruption, which is salved over with a delusion, is described in terms of a sore which is covered over with a thin membrane (as if in the process of healing), but which works its way

"inside, and infects the whole system. Confess heaven—confess your sin to God.

149. Avoid . . . come—avoid the repetition of your sin.

150 Compost—manure. Weeds—evil deeds are compared to weeds

151. To make . . . ranker—to make them grow more luxuriantly.

150—151 Do not spread . . . ranker—"do not by any new indulgence, heighten your former offences"

—E K Chambers.

152 Fatness—rankness or foulness. Purvey—pampering, indulgent.

154. Curb—bend (etymological sense). Woo—solicit

155 Cleft . . twain—split my heart into two.

156. Throw . . it—reject all that is corrupt in your heart

157. Live . . . half—with the regenerated part of your heart live a wholesome life.

159. Assume—affect a virtuous disposition

160 That monster . . . eat—custom (or practice) which extinguishes all sensibility.

161 Of habits devil—the evil genius in the sense that by repetition of acts it strengthens and perpetuates a habit which cannot be shaken off; so it enslaves us to habits Is angle . . this—befriends us like an angel in the matter of cultivating the habit of virtue

162—164 To the use . . . put on—'Just as a new dress or uniform becomes familiar to us by habit, so custom enables us readily to execute the outward and partial part of the good and fair actions which we inwardly desire to do' —*Moberly*. Frock or livery—"Two sorts of uniform 'frock' of a monk suggesting religion, and livery of a servant, suggesting duty"—*Dover Wilson*.

165—166 That shall . . . abstinence—it will make it easier for you to keep away from the king's bed.

169. Master the devil—overcome the instinct for sin.

169. Potency—power, efficiency. . .

170. Are desirous . . . bless'd—seek the blessing of God by purification of your soul. The mother has forfeited the privilege of blessing her son by her sin. So Hamlet will



have no blessing of hers until she has purified herself to merit the blessing of God

172—173 Heaven hath pleased . . . this—It seems to be the purpose of God to charge my conscience with the death of Polonius Hamlet has a tender conscience and susceptibility and the killing of Polonius cannot but prey on his mind Dover Wilson explains it in a different way. "The death of Polonius has placed Hamlet within the power of the king" This with me—since I am the instrument of his death.

174 Their scourge . . . minister—He used to be used as the instrument of the punishment of Polonius and Claudius. N. B. The task of revenge has been laid upon him by a power from the spirit-world He never questions his obligation, but he is conscious of the inadequacy of *means* and *purpose* for accomplishing the bloody deed This is shown in his soliloquies, where he always returns to the will and purpose of the revenge.

175 Bestow—hide. Answer well—take all the responsibility for.

178 Worse . . . behind—Hamlet hints accomplishing the murder of the king The hint is lost upon the queen. He may also allude to the consequences of his rash act in killing Polonius—fears about his personal freedom.

181. Blont—bloated (as the result of drinking)

182. Wanton—lasciviously. Mouse—a term of endearment

183 Reechy—explained as 'dirty' It is another form of *reeby*, and so it may suggest the foul breath of the king.

184 Paddling in—caressing.

185. Ravel . . . out—disclose of the mystery about me.

187 Mad in craft—mad as a matter of policy or craftiness 'Twere good—it would be good. Hamlet again assumes his sarcastic tone.

188. Sober—discreet

189 Paddock—toad Gile—cat. The toad, the bat and the tom-cat are all forms assumed by spirits attendant on witches.

190 Dear concernings—matters that concern him so closely

191. In despite of—in defiance of.

192—195 Unpeg . . . down—"The story is lost", but

Hamlet makes the outline clear; the ape carries a cage of birds to the top of a house; releases them by accident, and surpris'd at their flight, imagines he can also fly by first creeping into the cage and then leaping out. The point for the Queen is the publicity of the proceedings (*on the house's top* i. e. in full view of everyone), and that letting the cat out of the bag will involve her own destruction—*Dover Wilson*. Try conclusions—make experiments

196 Be thou assured .. me—Gertrude swears very elaborately that she will not breathe a single word of what she has heard. Words are made of breath, and breath of life, and she will not spend that breath in revealing what he has said.

199. I must . . . England—"Hamlet's knowledge of this has puzzled critics, but the king has decided on the mission (for the sake of Hamlet's health) before the play-scene .... and Hamlet would naturally be informed of the royal pleasure in order that due preparations might be made. Moreover Hamlet's words in II 214—215 imply that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been instructed to precede him, taking the sealed commission with them, in accordance with the usual practice of such political missions. What Hamlet does not know is that orders have already been issued for his leaving at once, and that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are now to accompany him as guards"—*Dover Wilson*.

202 Whom .. . fang'd—whom I will as little trust as serpents with poisoned teeth

203 Mandate—commission. Sweep my way—from this *Dover Wilson* concludes that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are to precede him to England

204 Marshall .. knavery—the idea is either to prepare the way for Hamlet to do the deed of crime or to catch him in a trap.

205 Engineer—engineer; the contriver of a plot

206 Hoist . . . petar—be blown with his own engine of destruction. Hoist—hoisted. Petar—usually petard, a mortar filled with explosives, used for blowing up the walls and gates of a besieged city. And't .. . hard—and it will be my undoing

207. But I will—if I do not Delve—dig. Hamlet uses

military metaphors He intends to meet their plot by a counter-plot

204—208 Let it work . . . moon—*Expl.* Hamlet knows that he is going to be sent to England. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are carrying the commission. He scents a plot. Now he will have to defeat the king's purpose He can but meet the plot by a counter-plot The plan is still hazy to him. But it will be a delight to him to have contrivers of the plot blown up with their own device. It will be worse for him if he cannot outwit them and catch them in their own trap

209 Two crafts . . . meet—hostile designs run counter to each other—

210 This man—Polonius. Packing—(1) plotting; (2) departing in a hurry

211 Lug—drag. Neighbour—neighbouring.

214 Foolish . . . knave—a silly, officious fellow who talked in stilted phrases

215. To draw . . . you—to have done with you

## ACT IV

### SCENE I.

**Analysis:** Asking Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to withdraw the queen tells the king that Hamlet is stark mad But the worse still follows In his fit of insanity he seems to hear something stir behind the arras and crying that it was a rat, he drew his rapier and killed Polonius. The first thought of the king was that the same fate would have been his, if he had been behind the arras. He would now be held responsible for the crime, for he should have kept him under restraint, but they were blinded by their love. The king decides at once to send him abroad, while he must gloss over the murder as best as he can. He calls Guildenstern and sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to find out Hamlet, and fetch the dead body of Polonius to the chapel He is going to summon the council and take steps to hush up the matter so that no slander may assail his name.

**Critical Note** It appears that till now in consideration of his queen the king has taken no measures against Hamlet. He is shrewd enough to understand that the fate that over-

took Polonius, might have been his as well. Just as Hamlet has been inactive in the matter of revenge, so the king too seems to have been taking time. And things come to a crisis. No critic has ever noticed that the queen is the evil genius in the play. She inspired the sincerest and tenderest devotion in her late husband so that the latter's spirit is still concerned about her. Here is Claudius who had been so infatuated by her that he stained his soul with his brother's blood. There is Hamlet again who seems to be deeply devoted to his mother, for otherwise he could not have been so deeply hurt by his mother's guilt. Now we may say that for the queen Claudius seems to have neglected his personal safety. The king's callousness with regard to Polonius' fate should also be noted—not a word of grief for Polonius

## Notes

1. There's . . . sighs—your sighs must have some profound meaning. Heaves—sighs that are drawn so heavily.

2. Translate—explain.

3. Where . . . son—The king already suspects that Gertrude's sighs must have something to do with Hamlet. The affairs of Hamlet must have worried the king since the play that was staged to catch the conscience of the king.

4. Bestow . . . while—leave us alone for a while.

5. What . . . to-night—the queen has been shocked by the manner of Polonius' death, which leaves the king cold, so obsessed is he with the thought of his own safety. The mother is anxious to screen her son as far as possible.

7. Mad . . . wind—mad as the elements when they furiously contend with one another. Lawless fit—fit of wildness. The queen uses a euphemism.

11. Brainish apprehension—fit of distraction.

14. It had . . . us—his first thought is his own, danger, and little sorrow for the fate of Polonius.

16. How small . . . answer'd—next the king is anxious how to hush up this matter, and for which purpose he will have to send away Hamlet, it is in this light that he is going to put the matter before his queen.

17. It . . . us—I shall be held responsible for the murder of Polonius. Providence—foresight.

18. Kept short—curtailed. Out of haunt—away from public places

19 So much . . . love—a concession to Gertrude.

20 We would . . . fit—we are too blind to see our duty.

22. To keep . . . divulging—to conceal it.

22-23 Feed . . . life—prey on vitality.

25 Ore—precious metal.

26. Mineral—mine.

27 Shows . . . pure—Gertrude means that Hamlet was really repentant for what he had done when he came to his senses. She knows that Hamlet is mad, but wants to minimise his crime

28 O Gertrude . . . away—Claudius must act at once. He makes no comment on Gertrude's explanation of Hamlet's crime. He is most concerned about his own safety and about the public reason to be given for the murder of Polonius.

32. Countenance and excuse—condone

33 Go . . . aid—seek the assistance of some people.

38 Call . . . friends—summon the council.

42. As level . . . blank—as straight as the cannon ball goes to its mark. Blank—the white mark in the centre of a target.

43. Transports . . . shot—wings its envenomed arrow.

44. Hit . . . air—waste itself.

45. My soul . . . dismay—the king is in a great agitation of mind, he is most seriously alarmed about his own safety. It is a vague presentiment of the coming doom.

## SCENE II.

**Analysis:** Hamlet gives riddling answers to Rosencrantz's inquiries about the dead body of Polonius. Hamlet calls him a sponge that soaks up the king's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. The king has a use for such officers, and when the king has squeezed all he can out of them, he will just throw them away. Rosencrantz cannot make out what Hamlet means. He cannot get Hamlet to say where he has hidden the dead body of Polonius.

**Critical Note.**—A short scene exhibiting Hamlet's flouting of Rosencrantz, the king's creature. He is certainly able to

keep his own counsel. And there is a dark menace in his words—he plays the part of a typical madman here, but the menace is lost upon Rosencrantz. His contemptuous reference to the king is understood by Guildenstern. Hamlet shows himself too crafty for the king or his creatures.

## NOTES.

1. Stowed—put away.

5. What . . . body—there is insolence in Rosencrantz's tone and Hamlet resents it. It is just a case of being dressed in brief authority

6. Compounded in—mingled it with dust of which it is made. Hamlet's words are charged with a deep meaning—the result of a brooding on life and its painful riddles.

11—12 That I can . . . own—that I cannot keep my own counsel, but must play into your hands. Sponge—a king's creature whose purpose is to pump information out of Hamlet and carry it to the king. A sponge sucks in water; so Rosencrantz will suck information out of Hamlet and communicate it to the king.

Replication—a legal term—an answer to a charge.

16. Authorities—offices of authority

17—18. Keeps . . . jaw—keeps these officers in pay so long as they can serve his purpose, and then discards them. Like an ape—the 2 Quarto reading is like an apple<sup>1</sup> which Dover Wilson adopts—"Shakespeare is thinking, not of apes, but of the groundlings, gnawing or sucking little pippins in in the theatre". First . . . swallowed—the idea is that the king, after he has got all the services out of their officers, will put them out of the way. The king knows that they are vile creatures and can be employed only on dirty jobs, so when there is no more use for them, they should be destroyed.

19. Gleaned—gathered.

19—20. It is but . . . again—information will be squeezed out of Rosencrantz as water is squeezed out of a sponge. Dover Wilson comments, "Verpasian deliberately bestowed high offices upon rapacious persons, so that the common talk was he used them as sponges, letting them soak when they were wet."

22—23. A knavish . . . ear—a crafty speech makes no

sense to a foolish person. Hamlet might as well mean that his speech is foolish and that Rosencrantz is knavish.

26—27 The body .. body—the body of Polonius is with the real king (Hamlet's father), in the other world, but the king (Claudius) is not with the body : *e.* is to be sent the same way A hint of the murder of the king yet to be accomplished.

28. A thing—Guildenstern resents the contemptuous reference to the king.

29 Of nothing—so he has already said, a king of shreds and patches.

29—30 Hide fox. . . after—a cry in some children's game as hide and seek.

### SCENE III

Analysis : The king is fully aware of danger of letting the Hamlet move about freely, but cannot put the law in force against him, for he is the darling of the people who go by their eyes, and not by their judgement. He decides to send Hamlet away—the only safe thing for him to do. Rosencrantz now enters. He tells the king that he has not been able to get from Hamlet where he has stowed away the dead body. Hamlet, who has been waiting guarded is now brought in. Being asked where the body of Polonius is, Hamlet replies that Polonius is at supper—not where he eats, but where he is eaten—he explains that a dead body is the food of worms, that one may fish with the worms that have eaten up the king's corpse, and eat the fish that swallows the worm. Then he says that Polonius is in heaven, and that if he is not found there he may be sought in hell, and if not in hell, he may be found somewhere near the lobby. The kings send some attendants to look for the dead body of Polonius there.

Now the king bids Hamlet prepare to leave for England—a measure which has been decided for his own safety. He bids farewell to his mother, but will say no farewell to his father when Claudius desires it. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are sent after him with instructions to see him abroad at once. The king reveals his design in a soliloquy. He counts upon England carrying out his will at once—which is nothing short of Hamlet's instantaneous death. So long as Hamlet is alive, there is no peace for him—"like a hectic in my blood he rages"

**Critical Note:** So long Hamlet has taken time easy, while he has been subjected to the deepest searching of heart. But now the time comes when he can no more delay decision. He is being sent to England—that means his opportunity of taking revenge, is cut off. It is the supreme test for Hamlet. The crisis can no longer be postponed. He must act now. Hamlet is not capable of prompt decision, as we shall see later. We cannot agree with Schucking when he says, 'the king keeps his patience but his manner necessarily becomes more stern—he speaks to Hamlet throughout in the second person—and once he has discovered the whereabouts of the body, does not delay in informing him of his banishment to England. Hamlet listens with a fatalism that shows his will is for the moment paralysed. It seems indeed that he is ready to be led like a lamb to the slaughter. During this night he has fallen from the highest pitch of "passionate excitement to the depths of apathy." The fact is that Hamlet cannot forget he will have to play up to his part before the king. His speeches no more betray any unhingement of mind than his exhortations to his mother. His careful tracing of the changes that a dead body goes through, however, it may betray a morbid delight in the macabre, is the test of his sanity.'

## NOTES

2. How dangerous . . . loose—the king fully realizes the risk to himself from Hamlet's freedom. Goes loose—is at large

3—4. Yet must not . . . multitude—the king is afraid of the people rising in favour of Hamlet if he is to be tried on a charge of murder. Put . . . him—enforce the law against him. Loved . . . multitude—loved by the unreasoning and fickle multitude. Distracted—crazy.

5 Who like . . . eyes—whose like or dislike is determined not by their judgement but by their visual impressions. It is their impulses that lead them to like or dislike a man, and not their judgement

6. Scourge—punishment. Weigh'd—considered.

6—7. And where . . . offence—where liking is determined by casual impressions or impulses, not by judgement, the punishment of the offender is taken into account, and not



the gravity of the offence. So if the king were to try Hamlet on a charge of murder, the people would seriously view his punishment, but would not consider his crime. To... even—to manage the affairs tactfully.

9. Deliberate pause—the result of careful deliberation  
 “The delay in calling Hamlet to account for Polonius’ murder must seem the result of policy, not panic”—*Dover Wilson*.

9–10. Diseases .. . at all—compare: “A desperate disease is to be committed to desperate doctor”—*Lyly* Desperate appliance—violent remedy.

14 Without—outside To know... pleasure—waiting to hear what you may please order him to do

21 A certain convocation ... him—N B In this line some critics discover an allusion to the famous Diet or Convocation, held at Worms before which Luther was synnibed to appear ‘Politic worms’ is a pregnant phrase, ‘politic’ suggesting craftiness and worm ‘an insidious person prying into another’s secrets Your—colloquial

22. Is your . . . diet—feeds like an emperor Fat—fatten

23 We fat . . . magg is—it is our destiny to feed worms, while we fatten ourselves on other creatures

24. Variable . . . service—different courses

25. To one table—to feed worms only. That’s the end—so the same end awaits the fat king and the lean beggar.

27–28. Eat of a king—fed on the corpse of a king Eat ..... worm—eat the fish that swallows the worm which fattened itself on a King’s corpse.

31. Progress—royal journey of state through the provinces How .. beggar—Hamlet traces the final destiny of the king. The king dies, and the worm, feeds on his corpse, now with the same worm, one may catch a fish, and eat the fish that had swallowed the worm, such is the state journey of a king The king feeds a worm the worm feeds a fish and the fish feeds the beggar.

34 The other place—hell

35. Nose him—discover him by the sense of smell. Hamlet means the smell of the corpse of Polonius

39. For thine safety—this is the politic, state reason for the banishment of Hamlet Hamlet is shrewd enough to see through the mouve.

40. Tender—regard.

44. The associates tend—your companions are waiting for you. Bent—prepared.

47. I see . . . . . them—he implies that his guardian angel opens his eyes to the peril that surrounds him. It is a vague hint to Claudius that he is forewarned against his danger.

50—51. Father and mother . . . . . mother—in their sin of adultery Claudius and his mother are one, so his farewell means farewell to both.

53. Tempt . . . . . abroad—get him on board as quickly as you can by your persuasion.

55. Seal'd—the death warrant is sealed. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not in the secret of the king.

56. Leans . . . . . affair—is connected with the business of sending Hamlet abroad.

57. If my love . . . . . aught—if you have an experience of the arms of Denmark.

59. Cicatrice—scar left by a wound. Looks . . . . . red—is not yet healed.

60. Free awe—fear spontaneously inspired.

61. Pays . . . . . us—renders us allegiance. Coldly set—lightly value.

62. Process—command. Import—has as its import.

63. Congruing—agreeing.

65. Flectic—fever. Like . . . . . rages—his existence is a torment to me.

#### SCENE IV,

Analysis: Fortinbras arrives with his army in Denmark and sends his greetings to the king and begs his leave for the passage of his army. Hamlet, as he comes out with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, meets the captain of the army, and learns that the army is proceeding against Poland. Hamlet dismisses his two companions for the time being, and when alone, there occurs a soliloquy, occasioned by the presence of the army. All occasions seem to incite his revenge. A man is no better than a beast if his sole business is to feed and sleep. God made man with such large discourse, looking before and after—the god-like reason—not to rust un-used. Should he attribute his inaction to bestial

oblivion or to some craven scruple of thinking too precisely on the event? He has cause, will, strength and means to execute his revenge, yet he has postponed it. Here is an army, led by a tender and delicate prince, whose ambition, scorns all danger. True greatness is not to wait for a sufficient motive or provocation for action, but to find the cause of quarrel in a trifle when honour is at stake. What is he doing? He has a father murdered, mother dishonoured—sufficient incitement to reason and passion; yet he remains inactive. Mere for the bauble of some twenty thousand men are going to death; the plot of land for which they are going to fight is too small to be their burial place. Henceforth let the thoughts be bloody.

**Critical Note.** The scene has little to do with the main action of the play. The only interest is Hamlet's soliloquy but it is doubtful whether the soliloquy throws any new light on Hamlet's character. Self-reproach can only be a refuge for a man, overweighed with abstract speculation, but feeling all the time the urgency of action—a strange self-contradiction in which Hamlet is involved.

"This soliloquy springs from one of Hamlet's characteristic weaknesses. Whenever another makes strong impression on him—even if it be merely a player shedding tears for Hecuba—he cannot resist contrasting his own faults with the other's qualities. And if he could be so humbled by a player's declamation, how much more must he be put to shame by the inexorable march of these troops of Fortinbras, who is risking his own life and those of his men purely for honour's sake! So far the soliloquy is entirely in accordance with his character. Yet the Folio Edition of 1623 omits it, and not without cause. The fact that it is not very skilfully introduced—the speaker has first to send his guards and companions on ahead—can hardly be sufficient reason for its omission, and it seems doubtful whether any objection could have been taken to the outbreak of an unnecessary war being used to exemplify particularly noble conduct. More probably it was felt that this speech was, from the point of view of the action not particularly effective at this moment. The Prince has let slip every opportunity for revenge that has so far been given him, has allowed himself without resistance to be banished, and—

is on the point of sailing to a far country under guard. For the time being any attempt to nerve himself for an act of revenge which must be accomplished in the country he is now leaving, must appear futile; and to put such an intention into words may even savour of boastfulness and detract from Hamlet's honesty of purpose. Furthermore, this same train of thought has, for the most part, already been expressed in still more striking form, when Hamlet bitterly reproached himself with cowardice in the soliloquy: "O, what a rogue and peadant slave am I! Consequently this attempt to spur himself on out of regard for honour after he has failed to be moved by more potent reasons is somewhat weak in effect, despite the great beauty and hyperbolic richness of the language. At all events the speech contributes nothing towards any increase in the general dramatic tension"—*Schubing*

## NOTES

2. License—permission
3. Conveyance—passage Promised march—the marching of troops for which permission has already been promised
4. Rendezvous—meeting place.
9. Powers—forces.
15. The main of Poland—the main part of Poland.
17. With no addition—without any exaggeration
19. That hath name—it is for honour, and for not any profit that the small patch of ground is going to be fought for.
20. Five ducats, five—'five' is simply repeated for the sake of emphasis.
21. A ranker rate—a large value. Fee—fee-sample i.e. absolute possession.
26. Will—"it surely cannot be that they mean to"—*Verily*  
Debate—light on the issue of this paltry land.
27. Impos'hume—abscess. Here used figuratively for pride or insolence. This is . . . . peace—it is the result of pride or insolence, bred by accumulation of wealth and long continued peace. Luxury and peace were supposed to have a corrupting influence on a nation.
28. That inward breaks—the metaphor of abscess is continued, which is supposed to burst beneath the skin.

28-29. Shows . . . dies—reveals no cause of the death of the man

32 How all occasions . . . me—how all incidents seem to accuse me.

33 Spur revenge—incite the motive of my revenge, which is so slow to act.

34. Chief good . . . time—main employment of his time

36 Discourse—reasoning faculty.

37 Looking after—the reasoning faculty which considers the past and the future. The point is the difference between man and a beast—for a beast has no past or future, but lives in the present

39. Fust—grow mouldy

36-39 Sure, he that made . . . unused—N. B. There is unconscious irony in it. It is certainly reason that distinguishes man from a beast, and as such it is a platitude. Hamlet hardly realizes that he makes too much use of his reason. He reasons so much about the consequences of his action, that "enterprises of great pitch and moment. . . lose the name of action"

Perhaps if Hamlet had exercised his reason less and obeyed his impulse more, his revenge would have been accomplished long ago. Is he not again unpacking his heart with words?

40 Bestial oblivion—forgetfulness which is characteristic of a beast. Hamlet has no reason to forget the task laid upon him, for he has nothing else to think of—he can have no other mental preoccupation. He has truly confessed to the phos that he, "lapsed in time and passion," lets go the opportunity of revenge. Craven—cowardly. Scruple—feeling of doubt about a line of action, which is the result of arguing the pros and cons in the case of Hamlet

41. Thinking event—measuring out the consequences of action. Precisely—exactly and minutely. Event—result

40-41. Some craven . . . event—N. B. Here is Hamlet's real weakness—thinking too precisely on the event. His impulse for action is absorbed into his speculation about the justification or consequences of action

42 Quarter'd—analysed and dissected.

42—43 Hath . . . cowards—on analysing his scruple or postponement of action, he finds that the proportion of wisdom to cowardice is one against three.

43—44. I do not know . . . to do—Self-reproach seems to be a refuge for a sensitive spirit, hurt by moral evil and shrinking from action.

45. Cause—motive. Will—not the will that will translate itself into action. Means—necessary resources for the execution of his purpose Hamlet lacks the necessary resources until he can get the people to rise in favour, which is a difficult job

46. Gross as earth—as palpable as can be.

47. Of such means and charge—so organized for a campaign

48. Tender—tender in years.

50. Make . . . events—i. e. defies fate and the result which is in the womb of future.

51. Exposing . . . unsure—exposing to danger life which is mortal and uncertain.

52. Dare challenge

53 Egg shall—"a little patch of ground that hath in it no profit but the name"

53-56. Rightly to be great . . . stake—*Expl.* Greatness does not reason or calculate. It does not wait to act until there is a convincing reason present. Greatness lies in finding the cause of quarrel in a trifle when it involves the question of honour. Greatly—readily or spontaneously. Quarrel—the cause of quarrel. How . . . then — what is my position or duty then?

58. Excitements . . . blood. sufficient motives to spur my reason and passion. Let . . . sleep. yet my reason and passions lie dormant.

60. The imminent . . . men—twenty thousand men ready to embrace death.

61. Fantasy . . . fame—the mere bauble or illusion of fame.

62 Go . . . beds—think no more of dying then going to bed.

64. Continent—cover.

66 My thoughts be bloody—let my thoughts be concerned with bloody revenge only.

#### SCENE V

**Analysis**—Horatio and a gentleman beg the queen to give audience to Ophelia. Her speeches, as the gentlemen reports, are incoherent and yield but a doubtful sense. Horatio advises the queen to see Ophelia lest her speeches generate suspicion (about the murder of her father) in public mind. The queen's own mind is full of misgivings. Then Horatio brings in Ophelia.

Ophelia sings snatches of old ballads in which she alludes to her father's death and her broken love. The king enters now. He is very much worried about Ophelia's insanity. But he makes Hamlet responsible for all the trouble. He seems to be alarmed because people are getting suspicious about Polonius' death and the situation may worsen still as Laertes has come back from Paris. He believes that Laertes has been entertained with perverted accounts of his father's death and might make trouble. All these thoughts press upon the king's mind.

Then a gentleman enters to announce that Laertes at the head of a rebel body, is forcing his way. The people declare that Laertes shall be king. Soon the doors are burst open, and Laertes enters, armed, followed by Danes. He demands his father of the king, and swears to be revenged. The king argues calmly with him, and asks him whether he would include his friends too in his revenge. Laertes replies that he would give his life for his friends. Then the king proceeds to prove that he is quite innocent of his father's murder.

Ophelia enters again. Her pathetic sight fills Laertes with pity and tenderness. She sings snatches of sad love ditties. The king proposes to Laertes that he should choose his friends to judge between them. If they find him to have anything to do directly or indirectly with the murder of his father, he is ready to surrender his crown, his life, and all that he stands possessed of to him in satisfaction. If otherwise, he is ready to collaborate with him in his design of revenge. Laertes is satisfied.

**Critical Note** Ophelia who is really mad, as contrasted

with Hamlet who feigns madness, evokes, our tenderest compassion. To Gertrude, conscience-stricken now, Ophelia's madness "seems prologue to some great amiss." The king's mind also is full of misgivings. The King who has so long steered his course smoothly, now finds himself in troubled waters. He supposes Hamlet to have been safely shipped off to England, and now he has to deal with the infuriated Laertes. However he displays cool courage and marvellous tact in the scene with Laertes. His shrewdness never fails him, only it could not win over Hamlet.

Some critics have misjudged Ophelia in the mad scene. The "bawdy" songs she sings lead Allardyce Nicoll to think that she had illicit relations with Hamlet. Now this is an ill-founded conjecture. The stray snatches of songs, which must have enjoyed a measure of popularity in Shakespeare's days, and which are only unsophisticated and not immoral, can have nothing to do with Ophelia's personal character. They cannot, at any rate, be any sign of the besmirching of her soul. We are rather touched by the simple pathos and haunting cadence of these songs

## NOTES.

2. She is importunate—she insists on seeing you. Distract—*i.e.* distracted (out of her senses)

3 Her mood . . . pitied—her condition is pathetic. It is on this ground that the gentleman requests the queen to give her audience. What . . . have—what does she desire?

4 She speaks . . . father—her madness has been caused by her brooding over her father's sudden and unexpected death (for the circumstances of his death have been hushed up by the king).

5. There's tricks . . . world—a suspicion about his father's death haunts her mind.

6 Spurns . . . straws—kicks angrily at trifles, frets and fumes in her madness. In doubt—of doubtful meaning.

7. is nothing—is full of nonsense,

8 Unshaped use of it—disordered form of her speech.

8—9. Move . . . collection—impel the hearers to piece together the meaning. Collection—inference, Aim at it—guess the meaning.



10 Botch . thoughts—patch up the words to suit the sense they apprehend,

11 Yield—represent or interpret

12 There . thought—they might make sense.

13 Nothing . unhappily—no certain sense, yet something speaking of great unhappiness

14. 'Twere with—it would be advisable to speak with her

15 Dangerous conjectures—guesses that might endanger the state or safety of the king himself Ill breeding—conceiving evil

17 Sick soul—soul, afflicted by remorse. An sin's . . . . is—as it is the characteristic of a sinner

18 Toy—trifle Prologue . . . . amiss—fore-runner to some great calamity. 'Prologue' is properly an introduction, in verse or in prose, to a play

19. Artless jealousy—suspicion which has not art to conceal itself.

21. Your—colloquial True love—true lover.

25 Cockle hat—a cockle-shell was worn in their hats by pilgrims who had crossed the sea. The dress of a pilgrim, favouring secrecy, was often assumed as a disguise in love affairs Staff—the pilgrim's stick

26 Shoon—old plural for shoes

23 Say you—do you ask me ?

31—32 At this head . . . stone—a simple grave, turf covered and marked by a tablet

37. Larded—garnished

38. Bewept—weited (to be taken with "true love—showers" in the next line)

41. God 'ild you—God yield reward) you !

41—42 The owl . . . . baker's daughter—the story comes from Gloucestershire—Jesus once went into a baker's shop and asked for bread ; the mistress put some dough to bake in the oven, but her daughter rebuked her for making the piece too big and reduced the quantity The dough grew miraculously in size where upon the daughter cried, 'Heugh, heugh heugh,' and this owl like cry caused Christ to turn her into an owl for her lack of charity

42—43 Lord we know . . . may be—"It is easy to see

meaning in Ophelia's words here : the baker's daughter as little expected to be turfed into an owl as Ophelia expected to be what she had become"—Goggin God . . table—evidently a greeting by a guest before partaking his host's hospitality.

44 Conceit—imagination.

47. Saint Valentine's day—February 14, when birds mate. According to a custom, the girl first seen by a man on St. Valentine morning, was considered his Valentine or true-love for the rest of the year.

52. I hope well—sometimes there is a glimmering of sense in her, she is not raving mad.

53—54 Lay him . . ground—thinking of her dead father.

55. Come my coach—now she fancies herself to be a great lady, and orders her coach

59. This . . grief—her madness is the due result of intense grief (her mind has been infected by violent grief).

59—60 It springs . . . death—so it is held that her disappointed love has nothing to do with her grief.

61—62 They come battalions—"As an army advances, the spies come first and the battalions follow"—Dover Wilson

63 Your son gone—the deportation of Hamlet is represented as a matter of necessity He most violent author ..

remove—he by his violent deed, being the cause of his own removal from Denmark—a measure perfectly justified by his crime Muddled—unsettled in mind.

65. Thick . . whispers—harbouring dark and foul suspicions in their minds

66. Done ..... ..greenly—acted but rashly.

67. In lugger-mugger—secretly.

68 Divided—out of Judgement—reason.

69. Without the which—without our personal identity and reason. Pictures—mere shows.

70 As much containing—of as great import.

72. Feeds on his wonder—lets his bewilderment grow more and more by hearing exaggerated reports about his father's death Keeps . . . clouds—holds himself aloof mysteriously.

73. Wants . . ear—has no lack of tale-bearers to poison his ear.

74 Pestilent—foul, mischievous.

75—77 Wherein . . . ear—since they have no definite facts to go by, they will not scruple to circulate malicious charges against us. Of matter beggar'd—lacking substance. Nothing stick—hesitate not at all Arraign—accuse. In . . . ear—circulating the thing among all.

78 Murdering piece—a piece of artillery, which was loaded with case shot: i. e., old nails, scraps of iron, etc. put into a case

79 Gives . . . death—the idea of repeated and prolonged torment of death.

80 Switzers—body-guard N B the Swiss served as mercenaries. In France the royal body guard was composed of them. So the guards attendant on the king were known as Switzers.

82 Overpeering of his list—leaping over its boundary

83 Eats . . . flats—does not swallow up the low-lying lands near the shore

84 In a riotous head—with an armed force

85 O'erpowers your officers—vanquishes your body-guard

87. Antiquity . . . known—in defiance of tradition and rule

88 The ratifiers . . . word—either antiquity and custom or they are ratifiers and props of every word Word—has been taken to mean 'title' or it may mean that the people who have rallied round Laertes, are ready to make good their words

89 Caps . . . clouds—by throwing up their caps and hands, and by shouting they proclaim and confirm it.

92. On the false trail . . . cry—a metaphor from hunting—the rabble have gone astray like a pack of hounds in full cry on a false scent

93 Counter—used of a hound working backwards on a trail, for example, when the scent has been lost, and the dog gropes about to recover it.

100 That drop . . . bastard—the least part of patience or forbearance will cast a slur upon my birth.

102 Cries . . . father—proclaims my father a cuckold (i. e. one whose wife is faithless) Brands the harlot—it was a custom once to brand a harlot, here metaphorically used.

103. What's .. .. giant-like—what makes you break out into such outrageous defiance?

105. Let . . . Gertrude—Gertrude comes in between Laertes and the king.

106. There's such divinity..... will—A king enjoys the protection of God so that the intention of a traitor can never materialize as an act. It is taken to be a vague reference to the divine right of kings Divinity—divine protection. Hedge—surround. Treason—a traitor. Peep ... would—entertain more in thought and contemplation, what he would attempt. Acts . . . will—can hardly carry out his purpose

112 Demand his full—put his question in full.

113 I'll . . . juggled with—I will not be put off with an idle or evasive answer.

114. To hell . . . devil—confound all loyalty and allegiance.

115. Deepest pit—the lowest depth of hell.

116. I dare damnation—I am prepared to risk losing my soul. To stand—I am not to swerve from my resolution, whatever may happen.

117. Both the worlds . . . negligence—I have not the least thought about the safety of my soul or salvation.

118. Let . . . comes—whatever may be the future state of my soul (even if it risks hell).

119. Stay—prevent.

121. For my means—as for my means. Husband .... will—make the most of them.

122. They .... little—however limited my resources may be, they will be strained to the utmost.

124. Is't . . . revenge—is it a part of your revenge?

125 Swoopstake—a metaphor from gambling at cards where the winner draws all the stakes including his own. The king means to ask whether he will make no distinction between friend and foe in his revenge.

128. To his good friends .... arms—I extend the most cordial welcome to his friends

129. Life-rendering pelican—it is said that the pelican, when unable to find food for her young, pierces her own breast and feeds them on her blood.

130 Repeat—feed

131. Like... gentleman—the king is always good at  
 oratory.

132. Sensibly—feelingly.

134. As level—a metaphor from shooting at a target.

137. O heart — brains—let my brains be burnt to  
 cinders by the fire of affliction

138. Virtue—property

139—40 Thy madness... beam—I will exact more  
 than the full penalty for your murder. Till... beam—the  
 scale of revenge against that of your madness is over-  
 weighted

143 As mortal... life—as frail and liable to destruc-  
 tion as the life of an old man

144—46 Nature is fine... loves—nature shows a  
 delicate sensibility in love, and sends Ophelia's sonnet after  
 Polonius as a precious token of love. Nature is explained  
 by Dover Wilson as natural of blood affection—"But love  
 is exquisite in working, and will sacrifice its most precious  
 possession as a proof of its affection for the dear departed"

147. Barefaced—it was a custom to carry a maiden bare-  
 faced on the bier. They... bier—Ophelia sings a fragment  
 of a ballad. The popularity of ballads in Shakespeare's days  
 is shown in fragments of them being incorporated into the  
 drama of the day.

148 Hey non nonny—often the refrain of a ballad.

152 It... thus—it could not have so stirred up my  
 passion of revenge as your madness does

153. A down, a down—another ballad refrain.

155. Wheel—either a refrain or a spinning wheel (in  
 which case it will be a song with which spinners relieve  
 their labour) Compare the song in *Twelfth Night* II, iv.  
 —"Come away, come away, death," about which the  
 Duke remarks

Mark it, Cesario, it is old and plain;

The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,

And the free maids that weave their thread with bones,  
 Do use to chant it

Dover Wilson writes, "I suggest that Ophelia is also  
 thinking of Fortune's wheel which has brought the leading  
 Statesman of Denmark low adown; if so 'becomes it' means

that a wheel (refrain) corresponds well enough with his condition."

155-156. It is the false steward ..... daughter—an allusion to some ballad or song which has not been traced.

157. This nothing ..... matter—all this nonsense is more eloquent than any sense.

158-159. There's rosemary..... thoughts—She gives rosemary to Laertes, and keeps pansies (emblem of thought, especially love-thoughts) for herself.

160. A document in madness—there is so much of instruction in madness.

161. There is fennel . . . columbines—these she gives to the king for the fennel is the emblem of flattery and the columbine, of faithlessness in marriage

162. Rue—emblem of sorrow. She gives it to the queen and keeps some for himself. Herb of grace—another name for rue. With a difference—"a heraldic term used to denote the changes made in a coat of arms to distinguish the junior members or branches of a family from the chief or main line. To the audience Ophelia's meaning is that the Queen must wear the rue as a symbol of repentance, while she herself wears it as a sign of sorrow"—Goggin.

163. Daisy—emblem of faithlessness. The daisy is given to the Queen. Violets emblem of faithfulness—"These she she cannot give to anyone, as there were no more left in the world."

168. For bonny sweet Robin, etc.—form a well-known ballad, the tune of which is preserved in many music books of the time.

169. Thought—melancholy. Hell—suffering.

170. She turns . . . prettiness—she touches with exquisite grace and pathos.

180. God . . . soul—"The common conclusion to many monumental inscriptions"—*Stevens*.

183. Commune . . . grief—have a share in your grief.

187. Collateral—indirect. In satisfaction—in fulfilment of the terms of revenge

188. Touch'd—infected with guilt.

191. Lend . . . us—be advised by me.

192. Jointly.... .. soul—work together in our plan,

195. No trophy . . . bones—"When a man of good family was buried in a church it was usual to hang his casque sword and coat armour in its tinctures over his tomb, special funeral armour often being made for the purpose." Hatchment—coat of arms hung over the tomb of a dead knight.

196 Ostention—funeral pomp

197. Cry to be heard—demand a satisfaction. As 't were death—the idea is that the appeal for the revenge of Polonius' death comes from heaven to earth, it is a sacred duty with Laertes. So Laertes has now the duty of avenging his father's death like Hamlet.

198 Call'd in question—demanded an explanation of it.

#### SCENE VI.

*Analysis.* Some sailors come to see Horatio. They say that they have letters for him. Horatio thinks that the message comes from Hamlet. So it proves to be. Hamlet writes to Horatio requesting him to procure the sailors' audience with the king. Horatio now learns that Hamlet on his way to England fell into the hands of pirates, who had landed him in a part of Denmark. In fact Hamlet boarded the vessel of the pirates and parted company with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who had sailed on to England. Horatio first takes steps to bring the sailors into an audience with the king and then prepares to go with the sailors to see Hamlet.

*Critical Note:* "This serves to keep the fortunes of Hamlet in our mind during the period of his absence. It is simultaneous with scenes 5 and 7, the action of which is practically continuous, and in a corner of the same hall, while the king and Laertes whisper apart.

*E. K. Chambers*

#### NOTES

1. What—what sort of people
5. I should . . . Hamlet—Horatio is right in his guess.
- 12 Overlooked this—looked over (perused) this letter.
13. Some means to the king—: & some means of access to the king.
- 14 Ere . . . sin—before we had sailed two days
- 15—16 Finding . . . sail—being overtaken by the pirates
- Put . . . valour—fought desperately with the pirates.
- 17 Grapple—encounter Boarded them—entered the vessel of the pirates. On the instant—at that very moment.

19. Thieves of mercy—merciful thieves.

20. I am            them—they expect a return for the favour they have done me.

22—23. I have words            dumb—I have a message to communicate to you in private, and it will fill you with amazement.

24. Too light . . . . mother—"a metaphor from a piece of artillery, his words are not big enough for the tidings as small shot is unsuitable for a large gun"—*Gaggun*. Bore—calibre.

26. Hold their course—sail on.

28. Make you way—bring you to the king.

#### SCENE VII.

**Analysis:** The king's explanation why he has not proceeded against Hamlet for murdering Polonius partly satisfies Laertes. First, the queen dotes on him, and he confesses that he is too mindful of her to hurt her secondly. Hamlet is the favourite of the people, and to have antagonised them would have recoiled on him. And Laertes complains that because it is so, he has lost a noble father and that a sister whose excellence is beyond challenge in all ages, is gone mad. He must have his revenge, and the king promises him every satisfaction, for he is personally interested in the revenge.

A messenger informs him now that some sailors have brought letters from Hamlet. The king reads out Hamlet's letters to Laertes. The letter says that Hamlet has been set ashore in his dominions, and begs leave to see him when he will narrate the circumstances of his return. So here is Laerte's opportunity. The king makes his plan known to Laertes: he will persuade Hamlet to contend with Laertes in fencing, jealous as he has been of the latter's fame in this matter, what Laertes is to do is to substitute a sharp rapier for his foil, and he will be able to pay Hamlet home for his father's death. Laertes readily accepts the suggestion and adds that he will poison the point of the sword with a deadly poison. To guard against any mischance or failure, the king will have a poisoned drink ready for Hamlet being sure Hamlet will ask for it after the fatigue.



Then enters the queen and she informs the king that Ophelia is drowned. She came with garlands, made of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies and long purples to the brink of a stream where a willow stood, and when she climbed the tree to hang the garlands on it, the branch gave way, and she dropped into the stream. She floated on for sometime, singing snatches of old songs and then went down. Laertes checks himself in his passionate violent speech and rushes out. The king and queen follow him.

**Critical Note :** The villainy of the king is fully manifested here. The revenge of Polonius' death should have come upon him, but his tact and cajolery not only arrest Laertes' blind fury, but divert it to Hamlet. It is a most diabolical plot that he hatches. We now know how opposite Hamlet's sum-up of his character is "That one may smile and smile, and be a villain". Perhaps none has a greater insight into the king's character than Hamlet. Let us remember that Hamlet has to deal with this treble dyed villain, and this will sufficiently explain his procrastination or incapacity for action. Hamlet with his insight and sagacity (which is illustrated in his dealing with the king's agents, Rosencranz and Guildenstern), should be given the credit of calculating his chances and risks most accurately, which partly inhibits his action. Laertes is ready for action and sometimes critics bring him into contrast with Hamlet—because he is not bothered with the scruple of thinking too precisely on the event. But action is not certainly the true measure of a man :

But all, the world's coarse thumb  
And ginger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the main account ;  
All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's  
amount ;  
Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act  
Fancies that broke through language and escaped.

But the chief interest of the scene is not the suggested contrast between Laertes and Hamlet, but the deep—laid

villainy of the king—it is the most subtle, because the least obtrusive study.

Shakespeare seems to bestow an extra degree of care and tenderness on Ophelia in the last scene. The sad and forlorn condition of the girl is re-emphasized in the manner of her death, however enriched with lavish pictorial details which illustrate the baroque element in Shakespeare's art in *Hamlet*. Schucking writes, "The account of her end is, in its incomparable pictorial quality and evocative power, a testimony to Shakespeare's supreme lyrical gifts. A description of nature in its serenity and loveliness suddenly emerges out of a welter of revenge, deadly enmity, villainy, and crime. Here, apparently, death itself loses its terror, becoming a gentle farewell to life (described most vividly, it is interesting to note, purely from the visual point of view) and as a welcome journey home." The description is further more so circumstantial in its details that the audience are in a position rightly to judge the accuracy of later accounts of Ophelia's end. To a certain extent she is the victim of an accident, as the branch overhanging the water, to which she is clinging, breaks, yet when she is being carried away by the stream she makes no effort to save herself, but resigns herself, it would seem, to her fate. It is therefore credible that the priest, later on, should be in doubt about the manner of her death."

### NOTES

1. Now must . . . seal—now in your conscience or consciousness you will confirm my innocence. Acquittance—discharge. A metaphor of discharging a debt.

2. Put . . . friend—accept me as your friend.

3. Sith—since. Knowing—understanding.

5. Pursued my life—aimed at my life. It . . . appears—there seems to be little doubt about that.

6. Proceeded . . . feats—did not bring him into trial for his crimes.

7. Capital in nature—deserving death sentence.

8—9. As by your safety . . . stir'd up—as you had an incentive to proceed against him, dictated as it was by your safety and discretion.

10. Unsinew'd—weak.

11 To me . . . strong—it was not possible for me to discuss them lightly.

12 Lives looks—dotes on Hamlet.

13. My virtue or my plague—whether it should be considered a virtue or an affliction of mine Be't either which—a confusion of construction between (1) be it either of the two, (2) be it which ever of the two. It may mean—be it both or either.

14 Conjunctive to—closely associated with An astrological term

15. Moves sphere—cannot move elsewhere than in its orbit Sphere—"one or other of the concentric, transparent hollow globes imagined by the older astronomers as revolving round the earth and respectively carrying with them the several heavenly bodies."

16 Could her—could not but move in close conjunction with her The king says that he is linked up with the queen in heart and soul, that the queen is almost essential to his existence

17 A public count . . . go—I could not bring him to a public trial

18 General gender—common people.

19 Dipping — — affection—ignoring all his faults in their blind affection for him

20 Spring — stone—two such springs are mentioned—(1) the Dropping well at Knaresborough in Yorkshire, (2) certain baths at King's Newnham in Warwickshire. It is nothing but a reference to water with petrifying power.

21 Convert graces—turn his fetters (imprisonment) into his honour (i. e. make him a hero for any punishment inflicted on him). E. K. Chambers interprets "gyves" as faults which should be fetters on his popularity.

22. Timber'd—weighted For . . . wind—to make head-way against the wind of popular resistance

23. Reverted—returned. Reverted . . . again—recoiled on my head

24 Not where them—missing their proper object.

16-24 The other motive . . . aim'd them—*Expl.* Here is the second reason why the king did not bring Hamlet to a public trial He is a darling of the common people. They would have risen for him if he had been punished. So blind is their affection for him that they cannot see his faults As

the Dropping well at Knaresborough in Yorkshire turns wood to stone, so their blind affection for him would convert his punishment for his crime or any restraint put on him into his honour. Now whatever measures he might have adopted to restrain him, would have recoiled on his head, and failed in the effect intended.

25. So—in consequence of your slackness and timidity.

26. Desperate terms—madness.

27. If praises . . . again—if I may praise what she was, when she was alive.

28-29. Stood challenger . . . . perfections—could have thrown an open challenge to all ages to produce her equal. "Moberly points out that the king of Hungary at his coronation stands on the Mount of Defiance at Presburg and challenges the world to dispute his claim." On mount—conspicuously, as on a hill

30. Breaks . . . that—this is a hint that the king is prepared to help him in his revenge.

31. Stuff . . . dull—such meek and sluggish spirit

32. Our beard . . . danger—my authority being insulted and defied even to bodily danger.

33. Think it pastime—make light of it. Hear more—Perhaps the king may be inclined to take Laertes into his confidence about his design against Hamlet, and why he has been shipped into England. When the news of the execution of Hamlet comes from England, Laertes will know every thing, and can no more accuse the king of any partiality for Hamlet. But as Hamlet returns, the king is saved the necessity of revealing the plot.

34. We love ourself—I am not regardless of my personal safety

35. Imagine—that I can pass-over Hamlet's crime

40. Claudio—it is curious that this fellow should be named Claudio, when the king's name is Claudius.

44. Naked—unaccompanied.

45. To see . . . eyes—to present myself before you.

46-47. Recount . . . return—narrate the strange circumstances under which I returned so suddenly.

50. Abuse—deception. No such thing—no reality.

51. Hand—hand-writing

53 Can ....we — can you throw any light on the matter?

54 I am lost in it—I can make nothing of it

55 Warms . . . heart—revives me from my heart-sickness or despondency

56 57. Tell . . . thou—fling to his face the charge of murdering my father. If it be so—if it is true that Hamlet has returned.

58 As how . . . otherwise—how can it be otherwise when he writes that he has returned?

59 Ruled—advised

60 So you will . . . peace—provided you do not persuade me to come to terms, or be reconciled to Hamlet.

61. To thine own peace—I am going to propose a measure that will give you perfect satisfaction and peace of mind.

62 Checking at—a metaphor from falconry, when a hawk forsakes her legitimate game and pursues a common bird that crosses her path

63 Work him to—prevail upon him to accept.

64. Ripe . . . device—fully worked out in my brain.

65 Under . . . fall—in undertaking which he is sure to meet his death

66 No wind . . . breathe—not the slightest blame could be put on anybody.

67 Uncharge the practice—not suspect the plot.

68. Device it so—manipulate the plot in such a manner.

70. I might .... organ—I might be the instrument of Hamlet's death. It falls right (1) the plot will suit you very well, (2) I have got hold of the right plot.

72 73 For a quality . . . shine—for a quality that distinguishes you above others. Your sum of parts—the sum total of your accomplishments.

74. Pluck . . . him—rouse such envy in him.

75 Regard—opinion.

76. Of siege—of the least importance. 'Siege' means fear and then rank. Part—accomplishment

77. A very riband . . . youth—a graceful accomplishment for a young man to possess

79 Light and careless livery—clothes expressive of their lively motion and care-free existence.

80 Settled—confirmed. Sables—black dress

81. Importing.....greatness—implying well-being and seriousness.

78—81. For youth . . . . greatness—just as it is fitting that a young man should wear gay clothes, so it is fitting that an old man wear black, which can best witness his well being and dignity.

83. Served—served in battle.

84. Can well—show their remarkable skill.

85. Had . . . on—seemed to possess marvellous skill, amounting to magic, in horsemanship. Grew . . . seat—seemed to be at one with the horse (and resembled a centaur).

86. To such . . . . . horse—performed such marvellous feats on horseback

87. Incorpsed—incorporated. Demi-natured—partly horse in being and body.

88. Brave—stately. Topp'd my thought—exceeded my imagination.

89. In forgery . . . . . tricks—in imagining feats in horsemanship

90. Come short . . . . did—fail to reach his actual achievements.

91. Lamond—"Some hold that there is here a personal reference of some kind, perhaps to one Pietry Monte an Italian riding master of the court of Louis VII of France." Dover Wilson thinks, "Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton, was created Master of Horse by Essex in 1599, while in Ireland, and this may be the point of the allusion. 'The brooch indeed and gem of all the nation' would suit well with Southampton's reputation at this period."

94. Brooch indeed and gem—i.e., pride and ornament.

95. Confession—"the unwilling acknowledgement by a Frenchman of a Dane's superiority"—*Dowden*.

96. Masterly report—report representing you as a master in fencing.

97. Art and exercise—skilful exercise

98. For your exercise—in the exercise of the rapier.

100. If one . . . . . you—if anybody could be found to hold his own against him. Scrimers—fencers.

101. Motion—practised and regulated movement of the body A fencing term Guard—defensive skill Eye—accuracy of thrust

103. Envenom . . . envy—poison with jealousy.
- 106 Out of this—out of this the king is going to evolve the plan.
- 108 Are you . . . sorrow—do you make a mere show of grief?
- 109 A face without heart—a face which can wear the expression of grief without the corresponding feeling.
111. Love . . . time—love does not suddenly blossom out, love is the slow growth of time. E. K. Chambers explains somewhat differently: "Love is a thing of time not of eternity; it has a beginning and an end."
- 112 Passages of proof—circumstances that test love.
- 114—15. Qualifies it—modifies and lessens the fire-like intensity of love. There lives . . . it—in the very intense passions of love there is an element (: e. the reaction that follows the vehemence) which tones it down.
- 116 Nothing still—nothing stays good always (but suffers loss and deterioration).
117. Plurisy—plethora (excess)
- 117—118 For goodness . . . too much—there is measure or moderation in everything, and even goodness, when it exceeds measure, sickens and perishes.
119. We should . . . would—we should carry out when we have the will to do it. Would—our will to do a thing. Changes—alters with time
- 120—121. Hath . . . accidents—suffers diminution and is subject to decay, because there are so many hindrances and accidents to prevent its fulfilment
- 122 This "should"—the fact that we should have done it at the moment of its inception. Spendthrift sigh—wasteful sigh because a sigh was supposed to drain away the blood from the heart
- 124 Hurts by easing—the sigh may relieve our anguish, but at the cost of the heart's blood.
- 113—123 That we would do . . . easing—Expl "What we desire to do we should do at once, otherwise our desire is subject to be cooled or delayed by the intervention of others or by accidents then our vain acknowledgement that we ought to have acted in time is, though a relief to our conscience, an injury to our moral nature, just as sighs, while easing the heart draw blood from the heart"

- N. B. Is this an unconscious comment on the motif of the play? Many a spendthrift sigh escapes from Hamlet and it hurts by easing leading only to the debasement of the moral nature.

To the quick o' the ulcer—'quick' is the sensitive flesh, and 'ulcer' is here the subject of application, so as to our sorest affliction: *e. Hamlet*.

126. To cut church—that would be a desecration of the church.

127. No place                      sanctuarize—no place, for example, the church should serve as a sanctuary for a murderer N. B. It is pointed out by Harley Granville-Barker that it is an ambiguous mark. The king appears to assent to Laertes' purpose, implying that the church should not give any protection to Hamlet, the murderer of Polonius. The king may also imply a condemnation of Laertes' hasty, rash resolve (cutting Hamlet's throat in the church), and it will be an act of murder in the public eye, and though it is done in the church, the church should not give Laertes protection.

128. Revenge                      bounds—perhaps the idea is that revenge should not subject itself to any restrictions. The king implies a distinction between murder and revenge. What Laertes proposes will be act of murder and he will render himself to be tried for murder. With his craftiness the king insinuates that revenge acts furtively, and therefore should encounter no restrictions.

129. Will . . . this—if you will have your revenge. Keep                      chamber—shut yourself in your room. N. B. The king does not wish that Laertes should meet Hamlet by accident, and do something rash, or be diverted from his revenge by Hamlet's explanations.

131. Put on—instigate.

132. Set . . . fame—magnify the fame that the Frenchman ascribed to you.

133. Bring . . . together—finally cause you to meet.

134. Remiss—careless.

135. Generous—of an unsuspecting nature. Contriving—plotting.

136. Peruse—examine carefully. Foil—a foil is a long, slender, fencing weapon with a blunt point.

137. Shuffling—trickery.



138. Unbated—not blunted Pass of practice ; (i) pass in which you are well practised ; (ii) a treacherous pass or thrust

139 Requite . . . father—pay him home for your father's death

140. For that purpose—to achieve that end. I'll .. sword—Laertes goes one better He is nothing, if he cannot better the instruction of his monitor.

141 Uncion—ointment. Mountebank—quack doctor.

142 Mortal—deadly.

143 Cataplasim—plaster. Rare—efficacious

144 Simples virtue—herbs that have the healing power.

145. Under the moon—it was supposed that being gathered by moonlight, their efficacy was greater. Thing—creature.

148 Let's . . . this—we shall further deliberate the matter.

149 Weigh . . . shapes—we shall have to consider how time and resources may aid us in carrying out our design.

151 Our drift . . . performance—our design is betrayed by our bungling

152 'Twere . . . assay'd—it would be better not to attempt it

153. Should . . . second—should be provided with a supplementary plan Hold—prove successful.

154. Blast in proof—burst in the trial A metaphor from the bursting of a cannon when being tested

155. Solemn wager—heavy stake.

158. Bouts—exercises.

160 Chalice—cup For the nonce—for the occasion.

161 Venom d stuck—poisoned thrust

162 Our purpose . . . there—we may achieve our end.

163—164 One woe . . . follow—one sorrow follows close on another—there is little interval between the one and the other

166 There is a willow . . . brook—N. B Here is a vivid description of the death of Ophelia It is described and not represented, because it is too painful an incident and also because the resources of the Elizabethan theatre were too inadequate to represent it.

"The scenic apparatus of Shakespeare's time would have been inadequate to represent Ophelia's death upon the stage ;

'even now it would be difficult. Even in Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*, which ends with a suicide by drowning, the event is only reported by a woman who sees it from a window"—*E K Chambers*.

167. Hoar leaves—the underside of the willow leaf is silvery. Compare :

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again.  
And howlest, issuing out of night,  
With blasts that blow the poplar white  
And lash with storm the steaming pane ?  
Tennyson. *In Memoriam*.

168. Fantastic—fanciful.

169. Crow flowers—explained as buttercups Long purples—the early purple orchis which blooms in April and May

170 Liberal—free tongued Grosser name—"of these one which the Queen had good reason to avoid, was "the rampant widow"—Goggin.

171, Pendent—hanging Coronet—small crown

173. Sliver—a branch stripped of a tree

174 Weedy trophies—garlands of weeds.

176 Mermaid like—a mermaid was a sea-nymph having the body of a woman and the tail of a fish

177. Chanted .. tunes—sang fragments of old songs.

Incapable distress—insensible of her own calamity

179-180 A creature . . . element—one to whom water was the natural element Indeed . . . element—endowed with qualities that fitted her to live in water.

181. Heavy with their drink—soaked with water.

183. Muddy death—death by drowning in which she was dragged down to the muddy bottom of the river

185 186. Too much .... tears—Laertes' remark comes very near conceit Shakespeare's characters are always made to relieve intensity of emotion in a conceit, or a play upon words

187. It is our trick—it is a habit with us, and on an occasion like this we can not keep back our tears. Nature . . . holds—nature's due must be given

188. Let shame .... will—however I may be put to shame

188-189. When these . . . out—when tears are shed, the womanly weakness or tenderness is got rid of.

190 I have a speech — blaze—his sincerity of grief has been questioned when he confesses that he felt tempted to burst into a passionate and rhetorical speech

191 This folly—this weakness in shedding tears Bouts it—extinguishes his fiery speech Let's fellow, Gertrude—the king is afraid that Laertes might do something rash.

192 Calm his rage—assuage his anger.

193 This . . . again—his sister's death will rekindle his rage and violence

## ACT V.

### SCENE I

Analysis: Two clowns who are digging the grave for Ophelia, discuss whether she should have the Christian burial. The first clown argues that it is a case of suicide and the second clown argues that if she had not been a gentlewoman, she would have been buried in unconsecrated ground. The first clown puts a poser to the second clown; What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter? The second clown replies that it is the Gallows maker. The first clown is not satisfied with the answer. He says that it is the grave maker who makes houses that last till doomsday.

Now enter Hamlet and Horatio at some distance. The first clown keeps singing as he digs. Hamlet wonders that the fellow could be so callous. He throws up a skull, and Hamlet moralizes about the skull. It might be the head of a schemer or a courtier. And it is being knocked about. Another skull is thrown up. Hamlet ruminates that it might be the skull of a lawyer. Where are his legal subtleties and quibbles now? The lawyer might have been in his time a great buyer of land; and thus what he has come to—his skull being knocked about with a sexton's spade, and all his statutes, recognizances, fines, double vouchers and recoveries are now valueless to him.

Hamlet addresses the grave digger and the clown parries all his questions with his wit snapping. However he knows that Hamlet has been sent to England, but if Hamlet is not cured of his madness in England, it will not be noticed there,

for the men in England are as mad as Hamlet. He throws up the skull of Yorick, the king's jester. Hamlet used to know Yorick. He was a fellow of infinite jest. Many a time he had borne Hamlet on his back. Now as Hamlet looks at the grinning skull, his gorge rises at it. Then Hamlet speculates how the dust of Alexander may finally serve to stop the hole of a beer-barrel.

At this moment enters a funeral procession, bearing the corpse of Ophelia, and followed by Laertes, the king and queen. Hamlet draws off with Horatio and watches the scene from a distance. Laertes remonstrates with the priest for curtailing the full ceremony of Christian burial. The queen strews flowers on the grave. She hoped to have decked her bridal bed, and what a pity that she was strewing her grave! Laertes suddenly leaps into the grave, calling on the attendants to heap on earth till the level ground rises as high as Pelion or Olympus. Hamlet comes forward. It is for him to mourn Ophelia in the most vehement terms. He too leaps into the grave, and there is a scuffle, started by Laertes. They are parted by the attendants. Hamlet declares that he loved Ophelia, saying that forty thousand brothers could not with all their quantity of love, make up his sum. He challenges Laertes to any feat on this point. He is ready to be buried alive like Laertes, if that is the enterprise contemplated. The queen seeks to excuse Hamlet's extravagance of speech and manners as a fit of madness. The king whispers to Laertes, begging him to hold himself in patience, and promising to 'put' the matter to the present push."

**Critical Note.** The grave diggers' scene has been objected to by some critics as out of place and unnecessary, for it holds up the action of the play. First, it has to be remembered that the romantic tradition allows the free mingling of the tragic and comic, so there can be no objection to it because it is a comic scene. Secondly, it serves as a relief to the tension—taking the mind off from the tragic occurrences for a while. But it is a comic scene, linked up with the horror and loathsomeness of death, it lies on the border line between tragedy and comedy. Thirdly, it reveals part of Hamlet's character—his morbidity, his macabre interest in tracing the changes that the corpse of Alexander the Great might have gone through—in short his preoccupation with death and corruption. Four-

thly, the scene is partly intended for the groundlings. We quote below from Schucking:

"The attraction exercised on the melancholic by the macabre prompts him to ask the grave-digger who must be well acquainted with such matters about different aspects of the process of putrefaction. But he does not keep to the topic for long. His attention is drawn to a skull that has just been dug out of the ground, which as he learns, is that of Yorick, once the king's jester, and though those of others have left him largely indifferent, his heart now warms at once and his fancy quickly sets to work to recall his childhood memories of this man showing that his affections of other days were as impulsive as the feelings of aversion he has shown through out the play. He makes it clear as his friendship for Horatio has already shown, that only human values, and not worldly position, mean anything to him; for in recalling the rare art of the court jester, who had always played with him in so friendly a way when he was a child, he shows nothing but gratitude, love, and genuine admiration. (The contest hardly calls for such warmth of feeling and it may well be that the passage conceals some personal allusions). He is all the more moved by the change, so shocking to one of fine sensibility, wrought by the course of nature in the reduction of what once had been so greatly honoured to something that can only arouse disgust. He meditates upon this abject lesson which so appeals to his pessimistic nature with an earnestness more fitted to some new discovery. indeed, he revels in it, as he had in the idea that 'a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar. These thoughts, distasteful to Horatio, so engross Hamlet that he does not rest until he has arrived at the conclusion that the remains might end by serving the most trivial purpose. . . The grave-digger at his task, and on the ground the skull, at the odour of which Hamlet holds his nose. . . later, the pageant of the burial cortege, and the strewing of flowers in the open grave—all imply a greater use of theatrical properties than is usual, and help to present a 'slice of life, imbued with a particular emotional atmosphere, in this case irradiated with shafts of ironic humour. Yet this humour has nothing coarse or offensive in it, for though at first sight such subjects as suicide, dead bodies, and graves hardly

appear suitable for comic treatment, they here take on a different aspect, largely because they are seen through the eyes of one who has lost all feeling of repulsion for what is horrible or sad in them. When looked at objectively their comic aspect, however, so elaborated here, can only be perceived by one who is keenly aware of the contrast between it and his own feeling of humanity.

In giving the part of the grave digger to the clown Shakespeare is catering for the tastes of the public, who like to have the tragic tension broken now and then. It was usual enough for the clown to appear in scenes having little connexion with the play; but here Shakespeare gives him a special duty and a particular physiognomy. In certain ways he is true to type, noticeably in his lack of connexion with the rest of the play and in his refreshing coarseness. There is comedy in the self-importance with which he expounds his professional experiences with dead bodies, and in the complacent way in which he airs opinions on matters of which he knows nothing. The unfeeling, yet perhaps inevitable, lack of reverence which he shows as he goes about his melancholy task, contrasts effectively with Hamlet's infinitely nervous sensitiveness that is continually at odds with the world. The impression made on Hamlet by the grave yard serves to strengthen him in his attitude. This scene, it may be remarked, is only apparently written as a dialogue; in reality, Hamlet expresses himself in one long monologue."

## NOTES.

1. In Christian burial—according to the rites of Christian burial.
2. Seeks .....salvation—a euphemism for 'commits suicide'
4. Crowner—coroner. Sat—sat in inquest.
- 4—5. Finds.....burial—gives the verdict for Christian burial.
- 6—7. How can that .. defence—it must be a suicide unless she drowned herself in self-defence.
8. Found—a legal word.
9. Se offendendo—a blunder for se defendendo, which covers homicide in self-defence.
10. Willingly—knowingly.

11—12 It is to act perform—The first clown makes a distinction without a difference by substituting one synonym for another. Argal—a mistake for 'ergo' which means therefore

10—12 For here lies the point .. willingly—V B Shakespeare seems to be parodying here the argument in a case (Hales vs Petit) arising out of the death of Sir James Hales. Hales was a common Law Judge. We may quite part of the argument below. First it was argued that "the act of self-destruction consists of three parts. The first is the imagination, which is a reflection or meditation of the man's mind whether or so it be convenient to destroy himself and on what way it may be done, the second is reflection, which is the determination of the mind to destroy himself and to do it in this or that particular way; the third is the perfection which is the execution of what the mind has resolved to do. And this perfection consists of two parts, viz, the beginning and the end. The beginning is the doing of the act which causes the death, and the end is the death, which is only a sequel of the act"

13. Delver—digger.

14 Give me leave—with your permission let me proceed.

14—17 Here lies the water.. .. himself—compare again the argument "Sir James was dead. And how came he by his death? It may be answered by drowning. And who drowned him? Sir James Hales. And did he drown him? In his life time. So that Sir James being alive caused Sir James to die, the act of the living was the death of the dead man. And for this offence it is reasonable to punish the living man, who committed the offence, and not the dead man." If the man himself—Sir James committed suicide by walking into a river at Canterbury. Will he, nill he—whether he wills or not

21 Quest—inquest.

23—24 Buried .. burial—buried in unconsecrated ground, and denied the benefit of burial service.

26 Countenance—favour; support

27. Even Christiau—fellow Christian.

32 He was .. arms—the first gentleman with a coat of arms. In some books on heraldry Adam's—spade is set down

as the most ancient form of escutcheon.

36. Without arms—without a spade. There is a quibble on 'arms.'

38. Confess thyself—the proverbial expression is Confess yourself and be hanged.

39. Go to—an exclamation expressing so many things impatience, protest, disapproval or disageement, etc,

42—43 That frame. . . tenants—a gallows lasts as long as the execution of a thousand criminals.

45 46 It does well. . . ill—it does good to society by disposing of wrong-doers.

46 48. Thou dost ill. . . to thee—It is just an illustration of the first clown's sophistry. The gallows does well to a wrong doer, but it is not right to say that the gallows is built stronger than the church, and therefore the gallows can best finish the speaker. To't again—try it again.

51 Unyoke—have done with it. The metaphor is from unyoking the team when the day's work is done.

55. Cudgel the brains . . . it—it is no use racking your brains about the answer.

56 Your—colloquial. Dull ass—the brain is the dull ass. Mend his pace—the brain will not improve. With beating—with your intellectual effort to answer the question.

58. Houses . . . doomsday—graves last till the judgement day when the dead, according to the Christian doctrine, would rise from their graves and appear before God to be judged whether they should go to heaven or to hell.

58. Vaughan—there was an ale house near the Globe Theatre and Vaughan is supposed to be the name of the proprietor. Dover Wilson says, "Shakespeare probably spelt it 'Yohanna' as Jonson did, for the form 'Vaughan' belongs to the corrupt Folio Text, while the notion quoted by Furness that it can be a Welsh name is apparently quite unfounded." Stoup—drinking cup.

60. In youth . . . love—quoted with corrupt lines from a song, The Aged Lover Renounceth Love—printed in Tottel's Miscellany—and attributed to Lord Vaux

62. To contract . . . time—in the original it ran: "And tract of time begins to weave." The Oh? and Ah? are merely grunts interjected by the clown who is digging the grave. Behove—benefit.



64. Has this feeling . . . business—this fellow must be callous when he can sing so lustily in making a grave

66 67. A property of easiness—a peculiarity that comes easily, (11) a characteristic of indifference.

68. Of little employment—which is hardly used in work.

69. Daintier sense—a more sensitive feeling.

70. Claw'd—seized

75. Jowls it—knocks it about

76. Cain's jaw bone—the jaw bone of an ass, with which Cain killed his brother, Abel. That . . . murder—Cain was the first murderer on earth

77. Pate—head. Politician—schemer or intriguer. O'er reaches—gets the better of. There is a quibble.

78. Circumvent—get round. One . . . God—"Cain was the first 'politician', he denied that he was his brother's keeper, and when God asked where Abel was he quibbled."

80 81. Good morrow . . . lord—Shakespeare ridicules the insincere greetings exchanged between courtiers when they meet. Compare.

But that they call compliment is like the encounter of two dog-apes—*As You Like It*.

The barren verbiage, current among men,

Light coin, the tinsel clink of compliment—*Tennyson*.

85. My Lady Worm's—now it is the property of the worm.

86. Chapless—lacking the lower jaw. Mazzard—head

87. Fine revolution—astounding change

89. Loggats—a game resembling bowls, played with small logs, in the form of truncated cones about  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches long. The jack at which the loggats were thrown was a wheel 9 inches in diameter, and 3 to 4 inches thick. Mine . . . ache—my head is puzzled.

91. Shrouding sheet—grave clothes.

95. Quiddities—legal subtleties and quibbles.

97. Sconce—head-

98. Action of battery—unlawful attack upon a person by beating; hence the charge of assault. Will battery—when his head is being knocked about by the sexton, the lawyer cannot threaten him with the charge of assault.

100. Statutes—bonds in acknowledgement of debt by virtue of which the creditor can have immediate execution on the debtor's body, land, and goods. Recognizances—another form of bond. Fines—money paid to the lord by his tenant for permission to alienate or transfer his lands to another.

101. Double vouchers—when two people are called upon to attest the party's title. Recoveries—the process based on a legal fiction, by which entailed estate was commonly transferred.

102. Is this the fine of his fines—is this the culmination of all his legal subtlety. Fine pate—his head, stuffed with legal tricks and quibbles, now no more than a grinning skull.

103. Fine dirt—the dust to which man is finally reduced.

103 104. Vouch . . . . . purchases—bear witness to his purchases of land.

105. Indentures—an indenture is an agreement written in duplicate on one sheet. It is cut in two along an indented or crooked line so that the genuineness of the parts may be proved by fitting them together.

106. Conveyances—deeds of conveyance or transfer of land. This box—this skull. "The box is the skull, the top of which turns towards the audience as he speaks, displaying its parchment like surface and its serrated sutures, strikingly similar to the indented lines which divide a pair of indenture into its parts"—*Dover Wilson*.

111. They are . . . . . calves—they have no more reason or intelligence than sheep and calves.

112. Assurance—(i) security, (ii) conveyance of lands or tenements by deed

122. It is a quick lie—a quibble on 'quick'—the lie is quick enough to pass from one to another.

129 130. Rest her soul—may her departed soul have repose!

131. Absolute—usually explained as positive or decided; it is better to explain it as exact or precise.

131-132 Speak by the card—speak precisely and to the point. The card is the card of the mariner's compass on which the points of the compass were marked. Equivocation—the Jesuit doctrine of equivocation consists in the use of ambi-

guous terms leading people to understand them in another sense from that in which we understand them.

135. Picked—fastidious.

136. Kibe—chilblain.

135-136 The age is grown . . . kibe—all classes of people have become so fastidious that the distinction between the lord and peasant is almost disappearing. The idea is that the peasant keeps no respectful distance from the lord, but walks so close that the peasant may tread upon the lord's chilblain.

138. Our last king Hamlet—the senior Hamlet.

144-146 He shall there—it is expected that Hamlet will recover his sanity in England, if he does not, the difference between Hamlet and Englishmen will not be marked (i. e. the English are as mad as Hamlet). "The supposed madness of Englishmen was a standing joke on the Elizabethan stage, just as the pride of the Spaniards and the drunkenness of the Dutch"—*Goggin*

153 E'en .... wits—there can be no simpler explanation of madness

154. Upon that ground—'ground' means cause, but the clown takes it in its literal sense.

157. Man and boy—from childhood up. Thirty years—The clown took up the sexton's job on the day Hamlet was born, and he has been at it thirty years. So Hamlet's age comes to be thirty. In the early part of the play the impression is Hamlet is young, having just left Wittenberg—his love being spoken of as "a violet in the youth of primy nature." There is the theory of the double time, worked out in Shakespeare's *Othello*. By the dramatic measure of time Hamlet may be considered as thirty; now he must have grown up.

157 Ere he rot—before he starts decomposing.

159-160. Scarce . . . in—fall to pieces when they are being laid in the grave.

163. Tanned—seasoned.

164. Keep out water—resist the action of water.

165. Water . . . body—water is the great cause of the corruption of the dead body.

169. A mad fellow's—the clown calls the king's jester a

mad fellow (because the jester played a practical joke upon him.)

172. A pestilence ..... rogue—let him be cursed for playing the devil with me.

173. Rhenish—Rhine wine.

174. Yorock's skull—"The Danish name 'Georg' sounds rather like 'Yory' or 'Yorig' and it seems probable (as Ainger pointed out) that this is the name intended. Many have taken it as referring to Tarlton; but he died in 1588, which makes 'three-and-twenty years' impossible; his name was Richard; and he was a stage-clown not a court jester."

—*Dover Willson.*

178 A fellow ..... jest—one with an endless capacity for fooling or jesting.

179 Of most excellent fancy—gifted with exquisite wit, which expressed his most lively fancy

180 181. How abhorred ..... is—how the skull produces in him the most loathsome feeling. My gorge..... .. it—the skull makes me sick.

183. Gibes—taunts. Gambols—pranks.

184. That were. .... roar—that caused such wild merriment to the company.

185 To mock ..... grinning—to jeer at the wide open skull. Chapfallen—with the jaw hanging down.

187. Let her paint ..... thick—so Hamlet says before; "I have heard of your painting too, well enough, God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another." Favour—appearance To this ..... come—the grinning skull is all that she will come to.

191. Looked ..... earth—looked like this skull when he had been dead, and was no more than dust

194. Smelt so—had a foul smell like this?

196. To what ..... return—what an inglorious end for man if he is to be no more than dust after he dies.

197-198. Why may not ..... bung hole—if we carefully trace the decomposition and change that the dead body of Alexander the Great had gone through, we may find the sticky clay into which he had been turned, now being used to stop the hole of a beer barrel.

199. Curiously—fancifully.

201. With modesty—with moderation and attention to probability.

204. Loam—clay paste.

208. That that . . . awe—even when Caesar was alive, he was a mould of earth, and he returned to earth after his death and yet during his life time the world trembled at his majesty.

209. Flaw—gust of wind.

212. Maimed rites—curtailed funeral ceremony.

213. With desperate hand—with violence.

214. Fordo—destroy. 'T was . . . estate—the dead must have been of high rank.

215. Conch we—let us conceal ourselves.

219. Her obsequies . . . enlarged—the funeral ceremony for her has been so far extended

220. Warranties—authority. Her death . . . doubtful—there was suspicion about her death a suspected suicide.

221. But that . . . order—if the great command of the king had not over-ridden the rule of the Church.

222. In ground unsanctified—a suicide is buried at cross-roads under a pile of stones with a stake thrust into it. Lodged—buried.

223. For charitable prayers—instead of prayers for the repose of the departed soul.

224. Shards—pieces of broken pottery.

225. Crants—garlands

226. Maiden strewments—the strewing of flowers on the grave of a maiden.

226—227. Bringing home . . . burial—laying to rest with the passing of bell and a grave in consecrated ground. Some see a resemblance between the burial and the bringing home of a bride.

229. Profane . . . dead—dishonour or turn into mockery the burial service.

230. Sing a requiem—sing a mass or a solemn song for the repose of her soul.

231. Peace-parted—departed in peace.

233. May violets spring—imitated by Tennyson:

And from his ashes may be made

The violet of his native land.

234 Administering angel—an angel that will tend on you and relieve your physical anguish.

2-5 Howling—howling in hell.

230. Sweets to the sweet—the queen strews flowers over Ophelia as sweet as the flowers themselves.

241. Ingenious—quick in apprehension.

2-6. Pelion—in Greek legend the Titans in their war against Zeus piled Pelion on Ossa in order to get on a level with the gods who dwelt on Olympus.

218 Bears . . . . . emphasis—expresses itself in such vehemence.

241. Conjures . . . . . stars—exercises the power of conjuration on the planets

252. Thou . . . . . well—to wish my soul away to the devil is not the proper thing for you to pray for.

254 Splenetic—given to sudden fits of anger. The spleen was supposed to be the seat of anger.

255 Yet I have . . . . . dangerous—when I am provoked, I may be nasty.

25. Which . . . . . fear—which your good sense would teach you to beware.

259 Upon this theme—on the question of love for Ophelia

264. Make up . . . . . sum—reach my intensity of love.

266. Forbear—leave alone.

267 'Swounds—a contraction of "God's wounds." Such curtailed oaths were used to avoid the penalty against profanity on the stage.

218. Woot—wilt thou. Fast—as a sign of grief. Tear—thyself—rend your garment.

369. Elsel—explained as vinegar. Dover Wilson writes, "The reading 'elsel' is much discussed, but W. E. D. has no hesitation in accepting it, while, as F. L. Lucas (letter T. L. S. 9. 7. '26) shows, the sense (vinegar) suits the context we will. What will you do for her (s e to show your grief)? asks Hamlet; will you weep? fight (as you have been doing)? fast (a ceremonial sign of grief)? tear yourself, s e rend your clothing)? drink vinegar to induce melancholy? or eat a crocodile to catch his trick of hypocritical tears?—a crescendo of sarcasm."

270. Whine—whimper Outface me—put me out of countenance.

273. Prate of mountains—talk of mountains being heaped on you.

275 Singeing—scalding. Burning zone—the belt between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn in the celestial sphere, according to the old cosmology.

276. Wart—small hardish permanent excrescence on the skin. Mouth—rant

280. Her golden complets—the pigeon lays only two eggs at once, and when the young are disclosed they are covered with a golden down.

291 His silence.. drooping—he will remain in a moody silence.

284—285. Let Hercules . . day—(1) "Laertes must have his whine and his hark. Hamlet had previously . . contrasted himself with Hercules: If Hercules cannot silence dogs, much less I, who am little like that hero"—*Dowden* (11) "Nothing can alter a man's nature, as the cat will keep on mewling and the dog barking so Laertes will according to his kind"—*Goggin* (111) "Nothing can prevent inferior creatures, such as Laertes, from following their nature, and now and then they get a chance to come to the front"—*E. K. Chambers*. (12) "Bluster away, my young Hercules but poor Hamlet's turn will come"—*Verity*. Dog . . . day—a proverbial expression.

287. Strengthen . . speech—hold yourself in patience in view of our last night's speech

288. Present push—immediate test Put . . . push—carry out immediately the plan of persuading Hamlet to fence with you.

290. This grave . . . living monument—a grim quibble on living monument—(1) a life-like monument and (11, a hint that Hamlet's death will serve as a living monument

291 An hour of quiet—a quiet that will follow when Hamlet is no more. We are reminded of the king's speech—"For like the hectic in my blood he rages."

292 In patience . . he—let us proceed in patience and with caution. The last two lines are in rhyme to mark the close of the scene and action

## SCENE II.

**Analysis:** Hamlet now tells Horatio how he picked the letters of commission which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were carrying from the king to England. He brought these letters to his own cabin, and then wrote out a new commission, substituting the names of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for his own. Horatio was left breathless by the villainy of the king as now revealed. Circumstances seem to have helped Hamlet. He could write fair—an art which he had despised and tried to unlearn. It now came handy to him. He happened to carry his father's signet. With this he sealed the commission that he had newly drafted. So Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were sent to their doom. In fact, they had courted their own fate.

Horatio is rather worried that the king would soon hear from England what has happened. But Hamlet is determined not to give the king any chance. The interval is his own. He is ready to execute his purpose before any intimation can come from England.

Now enters Osric, a courtier. He comes to tell Hamlet that the king had laid a wager on him on the chance of a fencing match with Laertes. Hamlet makes fun of Osric for his affected courtly speech. Osric starts praising Laertes in his silly, inflated language, and Hamlet cuts him short with his parody. Osric acquaints Hamlet with the terms of the match, which Hamlet accepts. Hamlet seems to have some misgivings, and Horatio would persuade him to keep out of the contest. But Hamlet dismisses such premonitions from his mind.

The fencing contest begins in the presence of the king, queen, and others. Laertes accepts Hamlet's apologies, but demands satisfaction for injury to his honour. They take up their foils. The king has cups of wine ready, for Hamlet, in the course of exercise, might get thirsty and call for a drink. In the beginning Hamlet scores, and suspects that Laertes has not put his heart into the play. Suddenly Laertes gets enraged, and wounds Hamlet. Hamlet's blood is up, and in the scuffle he exchanges rapiers, and he also wounds Laertes.

In the meantime the queen happens to drink the poisoned cup, prepared for Hamlet by the king, and collapses, but she



cries out with her dying voice that she has been poisoned. Hamlet suspects some foul play. Now Laertes confesses the whole plot—how Hamlet has been wounded by a poisoned rapier, and that he has no more than half an hour to live. Laertes blames the king for the whole plot, which now recoils on his head. Now Hamlet turns upon the king with the poisoned rapier, and stabs him; and forces down his throat the poisoned wine too—and the king dies. Laertes and Hamlet are now reconciled. Hamlet requests Horatio to report him and his cause rightly to the public dissuading him to poison himself too in imitating the "antique Roman".

In the meantime young Fortinbras returning victorious from Poland arrives on the scene. With his dying voice Hamlet nominates him his successor. The tragic spectacle amazes him. Death seems to be holding his revelry. The English ambassador too has arrived and announces the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Fortinbras gives orders that the dead bodies be placed high on a stage in view of the public. Hamlet is carried by four capains and placed on the stage. Fortinbras pays him the last tribute of praise and commendation. The scene concludes with a death march.

**Critical Note** The last scene is crowded with events. First, there is the revelation of the king's villainy made by Hamlet to Horatio. It shows that Hamlet takes Horatio more and more into his confidence. It should be noted—that a fatalistic apathy has come over Hamlet. There are misgivings in his heart—forewarnings of fate, but he seems to be indifferent, let come what may or will. It is the very apathy of *Tedium vitae*. "How ill all's here about my heart—it means more than a mere premonition; it speaks of his heart—sickness."

Shucking writes, "There is a certain slackening of tension, a sense of fatigue in his attitude, which seems to undermine his power of resistance, a power which previously could be felt even when he was playing with thoughts of suicide. His last words to Horatio, therefore, sound like an admission that his heart has grown old, that life holds nothing more of value for him. They have a ring of farewell about them."

We watch now with interest the carrying out of the plot

They rightly counted on Hamlet's unsuspecting nature. When the fencing contest begins, Laertes manages to get hold of an unblunted rapier. According to the plan, Laertes gives a few chances to Hamlet. But this make-believe cannot be kept up too long. Laertes happens to wound Hamlet with the poisoned point; in his rage Hamlet snatches away Laertes' rapier, and wounds him too. At the same moment both the plotters are caught in the trap. The queen happens to drink the poisoned cup intended for Hamlet, and collapses. Laertes is wounded by his own poisoned rapier. There remains only the king. It is Laertes who now denounces his accomplice. At last Hamlet accomplishes his revenge. The reconciliation between Hamlet and Laertes is the fitting close to this tragic scene.

"His dying words are addressed to Horatio whom he seeks to restrain from suicide by charging him to inform the world of all that has taken place. For Hamlet is no Timon, dying in bitter hostility towards mankind, and although during his life-time he has never allowed himself to be affected by the world's opinion, it seems to him a point of honour that posterity should know the truth. When he hears of the coming of Fortinbras, whom chance brings on to the scene of the tragedy, he repeats his request that Fortinbras, whose great heritage he in no way grudges, should be told everything. Death cuts short his words. Hamlet, who, as always, can take a detached view, and is never at a loss for a descriptive phrase about himself, is able even at the point of death to sum up every thing in a few splendidly impersonal and ironical words: 'The rest is silence'."

### NOTES

1. So much . . . . . this—Hamlet evidently refers to the late incident in connexion with Ophelia's burial. Now . . . other—now he is going to tell Horatio of the trick he played upon Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They enter the stage in the midst of a conversation.

2. Circumstance—detail.

4-5. In my heart . . . . . sleep—their was a tumult in my heart and it did not let me sleep.

6. Mutines in the bliboës—mutineers in fetters.

7. Praised . . . . . it—I owe my life to my rashness.

addressed to sovereign princes at this period, Hamlet is contemptuous of a style that marked the trained clerk rather than the gentleman"—*Dover Wilson*

33. Statists—statesman.

34. A baseness ..... fair—Hamlet was taught to consider the art of writing fair as despicable

35. Forget . . . learning—unlearn the art of writing fair.

36. It did .. . service—it stood me in good stead. Yeoman's service—referring to the Yeoman's obligation to render military service to his feudal lord, or to the bravery of English archers who were mostly drawn from the yeoman class.

38. Conjurat[i]on—request.

39. Tributary—vassal

41. As peace ... wear—peace is associated with plenty, and so peace is represented as crowned with the garland of wheat stalks.

42. Stand ... . amities—as *Dover Wilson* points out, Hamlet means that the two nations are inveterate foes who will, after the briefest pause, be at each other's throats again.

43. Many such like . . . charged—many such conventional greetings, in high sounding phrases, but with little of meaning. There is a quibble, "as'es" i. e. a string of asses bearing heavy burdens, and so 'charge' means (2) importance, (1) load

44. On the view . . . contents—on looking through, and being acquainted with, the contents of the letter.

45. Debatement—deliberation.

47. Shriving time—time for confession of sin and absolution.

48. Ordinant—directing or controlling my fate

50. Model . . . seal—a copy of the seal, used by the king of Denmark

51. Writ—the letter written in form . . . other—exactly in the manner of the other letter.

52. Subscribed it—signed it. Impression—mark of the seal. Placed . . . safely—deposited it in their safe custody.

53. Changeling—substitute. The word is used of misshapen brat, left in place of a human child, stolen by fairies.

8. Our indiscretion.. . . well—our rash act may sometimes be more helpful to us than caution.

9. Deep plots—elaborate schemes Pall—literally, to become vapid and tasteless like wine, and thence, fail. Learn—teach.

10-11. There's a divinity .... will—there is a divine power which seems to guide and control our purposes or the results of our actions, however we may work at them and try to bring them to success.

13. Sea-gown—a coarse, high-collared, short-sleeved, gown reaching to the middle of the leg, worn by sailors. Scarfed—thrown loosely.

14. Groped ..... them—crept on my way to find them. Had my desire—found the cabin which they occupied.

15. Finger'd—stole. In fine—finally

17. My fears ..... manners—ignoring propriety in my fear for my safety.

18. Grand—ironical. Commission—letters of commission.

19. Royal knavery—wicked plot of the king Exact command—a command not to be mistaken, but to be carried out in all detail

20. Larded—furnished.

22. Such bugs .. . life—(s) such crimes attributed to me, (s) "With the suggestion of such terrors and perils if I am allowed to live"—*Herford*.

23. Supervise—perusal. No leisure bated—no interval allowed

24. Not to stay..... axe—not to waste the time for the sharpening of the axe.

29. Being . . . . . villainies—thus beset with treacherous plots.

30. Ere .... brains—before I could begin to deliberate as to my plan of action.

31. They had .. . play—the brains were busy devising a plan. The idea is that the *play* started before the *prologue* was spoken. "Before he could summon his faculties and propose to himself what should be done, a complete scheme of action presented itself to him."—*Johnson*.

32. Wrote it fair—wrote it in a neat hand. "Referring to the elaborate Italian calligraphy employed in state letters

54. Sequent—subsequent.

56. Go to it—meet their doom.

57. They did make . . . . . employment—it was a labour of love to them, and in fact they invited their own doom.

58. They. . . conscience—I have not the least scruple in sending them to death Defeat—destruction.

59. Doth . . . grow—is the result of their own trickery.

60. Insinuation—artful intrusion into the business of others

62. 'Tis . . . . . opposites—when inferior characters like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come in between two mighty opponents (here the king and Hamlet), they are likely to be smashed to atoms Feil . . . . . points—the points of the rapiers, wielded by relentless opponents What a king . . . these—Horatio is astounded at the vileness and wickedness of the king.

63. Does it . . . . . upon—do you not think it is obligatory on me

64. Stain'd—dishonoured

65. Popp'd in . . . . . hopes—ascended the throne to the exclusion of me.

66. Thrown . . . life—made an attempt upon my own life. The King is a fisherman angling for his life.

67. Cozenage—deceitfulness (the dirty trick of sending Hamlet to England where he is to be immediately put to death.)

67-68. Is it not . . . . . arm—am I not completely justified in chastizing him with all the strength and skill I am possessed?

69-70. Is it not . . . . . evil—shall I not be cursed if I permit this evil minded and malicious man to live and make further mischief. Canker—spreading sore or ulcer Hamlet seems unconsciously to echo the King. We are reminded of "to the quick o' the ulcer," which the King applies to Hamlet.

71-72. It must be . . . . . there—he will soon be informed of the result of the mission to England. It will be short—yes, it is true that he will get to know the truth soon. Interim—interval. The interim . . . . . mine—it is for me to utilise the interval.

74. The man's life. . . . . one—it takes no more than to count one to kill a man. "This which is passed over in

silence by editors refers I think to the single thrust of a rapier, cf. *Rom.* 2. 4 23. 'One, two, and the third in your bosom'—*Dover Wilson*.

76. That ... myself—that I wronged Laertes.

77. By the image..... cause—in the light of my own cause.

77—78. By the image... his—Laertes has a father lost like myself, and deserves as much consideration or my sympathy. Court his favours—seek his friendship.

79. The bravery of his grief—the display that he made of his grief.

82 I..... you—Hamlet mimics the affected humility of Osric

83. Water fly—Hamlet compares Osric to one of those flies which are seen skipping up and down the surface of the water in an apparently aimless manner.

"Osric, a type of empty-headed courtier, or man about town, the affected bubble, parleying Euphuism or the Sidneian tongue, and so covering his nothingness with a nicety of borrowed phrase." *E. K. Chambers*.

35. They state .. him—you are in a better position than myself, for it is a disgrace to know him.

87—88. Let a beast .. mess—let a silly fellow like Osric possess several heads of cattle, and he will find a place at the king's table or be his courtier. Hamlet means to say that the only recommendation to be a courtier is to possess estates, but no brains. Chough—a jack daw, therefore, a chatterer.

89. Spacious .. dirt—in his cynicism Hamlet regards land as so much dirt; so the possession of dirt is a great recommendation for Osric,

90. Were at leisure—had time to listen to me.

92. Diligence of spirit—earnestness. "Implying that it may try his spirits"—*Dover Wilson*.

93. Put .... used—Osric has been standing uncovered, and Hamlet requests him to put on his hat

96. It's.. .. indeed—Osric simply echoes Hamlet, and it is shown here how ridiculous a courtier can be.

103. Remember—remember that you have done enough for your courtsey; put on your hat.

104 For mine ease—this is a courteous reply when the person remains uncovered

106 Excellent differences—excellent qualities that distinguish him from others

107 Of . . . shown—possessing an amiable disposition and great abilities Feelingly—with just discrimination.

108. Card ... gentry—the very guide and model of courtesy and good breeding to men of gentle birth. Laertes is the card by which a gentleman is to guide his course, the calendar by which he is to choose his time.

109. Continent—the sum total. Part—quality. You . . . see—you shall find him containing every quality which a gentleman would desire to contemplate for imitation—*Johnson*.

111 His definement . . . you—your description of the gentleman suffers no loss.

112 Divide him . . . inventorially—to catalogue his virtues, item by item

112—113 Dizzy .. memory—stagger the calculating brain. Yaw—deviate from the course; turn from side to side

113—114 Yet but yaw . . . sail—yet nevertheless the computation of virtues will lose itself—fall out of the track—in the multiplicity of details In . . . extolment—terms of the praise that is due to him.

115. The soul of great article—the soul that will be highly prized. A mercantile phrase.

115—116 His infusion. . . . rareness—essence of his rare virtues and qualities.

117—118. To make true . . . mirror—if any attempt is to be made to describe him it is only his mirror that can reflect him Who else . . . more—who else would describe him but must reflect his shadow and nothing more.

111—118 Sir, his definement nothing more—*Expl.* *Osric* has mixed the metaphors of the shop and the ship; and *Hamlet* follows suit To paraphrase: the specification (definement) of his perfections has lost nothing at your hands though I know they are so numerous that to make a detailed inventory of them, (as a shopkeeper might) would puzzle (dizzy) the mental arithmetic of the ordinary commercial man, who would, moreover, be left staggering (and yet but yaw

neither') by his quick sale (with a quibble on and sail'), but in truth I take him to be a soul of great scope, ('article,' with a commercial quibble: 'the particulars of an inventory are called articles, Johnson', and essence ('infusion') of such cosiness ('dearth') and rarity, that indeed I can compare him with nothing save his own looking-glass, for what can better describe him than a shadow? The whole speech is rattled off and intended, of course, to be a rubbish-heap of affectations, but there is more in it than has been perceived"—*Dover Wilson*.

119 *Speaks*. . . . .him—describes him without any mistake.

120. *Concernancy*—the matter that concerns you.

120—121. *Why do you . . . breath*—what is the reason that we discuss this gentleman in our unskilled talk? The idea is this, we simply insult him by talking about him in this manner.

123—124 *Is it not . . . tongue*—can you not understand your own jargon on the tongue of another? *You. . . . it—surely you can, if you try.*

125. *What . . . gentleman*—what is your purpose in naming this gentleman?

*Hamlet still speaks in stilted phraseology,*

126—127. *His purse . . . spent*—he has exhausted his stock of fine words.

132 *It would . . . me*—it would not be much of a compliment to me. Hamlet implies that if a silly fellow like Osric allows for his intelligence, it is no compliment to him.

134. *I dare . . . that*—I cannot make bold to say that I am perfectly acquainted with Laertes' excellence.

135—136 *To know . . . himself*—you must first know yourself well before you can know another. Sir Thomas Browne says, "No man can judge another, because no man knows himself."

137 *For his weapon*—as for his excellence in the use of the rapier. *Imputation—reputation.*

138 *Meed—merit* *Unfellowed*—without an equal.

139. *What's his weapon*—what style of fencing does he follow.



142—143 Barbary horses—horses said to have come from the Barbary states on the Mediterranean coast of Africa.

144 Poniards—daggers Assigns—appurtenances

145. Hangers—straps by which a sword is attached to the girdle. Carriages—an inflated synonym for hangers.

146. Dear to fancy—of exquisite workmanship Responsive to—in keeping with

147 Liberal conceit—elaborate design

149—150. I knew you done—you would need to be enlightened by the marginal commentary Explanatory notes were formerly printed on the margin of the page.

152—153 Germane to the matter—appropriate.

153—154. I would then—I wish you would stick to hangers until we could carry cannon by our sides (because carriage goes well with cannon)

158—160 The King, sir, . nine—"Johnson writes 'This wager I do not understand In a dozen passes one must exceed the other more or less than three hits Nor can I comprehend how, in a dozen, there can be twelve to nine

The passage is of no importance, it is sufficient that there was a wager—and later editors have remained puzzled. We can be certain that to the Elizabethans the passage was important, and that Shakespeare would have given much thought to the details of a sporting event which was one of the major attractions of his play. And there is no real difficulty, once it is grasped that in 'He hath laid on twelve for nine, the 'he' of the previous sentence, viz, Laertes; and that 'laid' and 'laid on' mean not 'laid a wager,' but 'laid down conditions' these conditions are 'On the King's side, that Laertes must win by at least three up (as a modern sports man would put it,) and on Laertes', that the match must be of twelve bouts instead of the usual nine in order to give him more elbow and room, since to win 'three up' in a match of nine would mean winning six bouts to Hamlet's three, with no allowance for 'draws', which would be fearful odds to give"—*Dover Wilson*.

161 Vouchsafe the answer—accept the challenge Hamlet takes the literal sense of the answer.

163-164. The opposition .... trial—Osric explains what he means by, 'answer' i. e. encountering Laertes in the fencing match.

165. Breathing . . . day—time for exercise

168. Hold his purpose—does not change his mind.

169. Gain . . . hits—be put to shame, and receive some thrusts into the bargain.

170. Re-deliver you—return your answer

171. After what flourish . . . will—with whatever embellishment you please.

172. Commend . . . to—presents my respects to. A polite form of leave taking

173. Yours—at your service

173-174. He does . . . himself—Hamlet takes 'duty' to mean bow or obeisance and 'commend' to mean praise. So he (Osric) does well to praise his ungainly bowing and scraping—There are no . . . turn—no one else will praise it for him

176-177. This lapwing head—Horatio calls Osric a lapwing & a peewit; he is compared to a lapwing because a lapwing, when newly hatched, was supposed to run about with its head in the shell

178-179. He did . . . it—Hamlet implies that even as a baby Osric must have been fond of ceremony; so Osric paid compliments to his mother's breast before sucking it. Bevy—brood.

180. Drossy—frivolous Got . . . time—picked up the fashionable style of speaking Outward habit of encounter—the exterior manner of address Dover Wilson reads 'out of an habit of encounter' and explains that the yesty collection is got out of an habit of encounter: it is the fruit of encounters and exchange of compliments with other gallants as absurd as himself.

181. Yesty collection—"an assortment of phrases, flourishes, etc. which float upon the mind of these courtiers like froth upon a vat. The whole passage is a sustained metaphor from the fermentation of barley for brewing"—*Dover Wilson*.

181-184. A kind yesty collection out—Expl: "Osric is a type of the foolish young man about town, who picks up the phrases and tricks of style fashionable at the moment, and uses them without any originality or understanding; who

parleys Euphuism after Lyly, and Arcadianism after Sidney. Hamlet says of him and his kind that they have only got the slang of the day and its manner of dialogue. These borrowings (or 'collection') act as yeast to 'raise' or fill with bubbles the bread of their absurd and fantastic opinions: if you blow them to their trial (*i. e.* talk to them with an originality in their vein) the bubbles burst, their golden words are spent—*E. K. Chambers.*

Dover Wilson adopts the reading—'profound and winnowed' . . . and explains—which enables them to impose upon the tried and experienced men of the world "The image is that of frothy bubbles on the vat passing the malted barley which has been previously winnowed (by the keen winds of experience) Fond—foolish Winnowed—over refined Opinions are compared to light chaff, winnowed and blown away from the heavier wheat.

189. Take longer time—put it off for sometime.

190. Am constant purposes—Do not change my mind  
He also means that he will carry out his revenge upon his uncle.

191. They . . . pleasure—my purposes depend (in the matter of meeting Laertes in a fencing match) on the king's will. If his . . . speaks—if he finds it convenient. Mine is ready—it will be convenient to me.

192. In happy time—a phrase denoting agreement and approval.

194—195 Use . . . Laertes—show yourself courteous in behaviour with Laertes.

199. At the odds—with allowance made to a weaker player in a contest, with a handicap allowed to me.

200—201 How ill all's . . . heart—apart from the premonitory character of the utterance, Hamlet bewails his heart sickness, world-weariness—a total enervation of energy and listlessness—the attitude that nothing matters to him now. This is the most tragic moment in his life. It is no matter—he dismisses the thought at once.

203. Gain giving—misgiving

205 If your . . . It—obey the intuition of your mind

205 Foretell . . . repair—meet them before they come here and cancel the appointment.

207. Defy augury—disregard forebodings of evil.

207—218. There's a special . . . sparrow—Compare :  
 "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing—one of them shall not fall on the ground without your father"—Matthew, x 29.  
 Does Hamlet believe in divine providence? Or is it an expression of his fatalism? Perhaps, as the next few lines show, it is a reflex of the determinism of the ancient Greek tragedy.

208—210. If it be now . . . come—in any case you cannot escape your fate, whatever is to happen, must happen, whether now or in the future—no getting away from it. The readiness is all—"The whole speech, as Brandes notes . . . is a distillation of Montaigne . . . ."—*Dover Wilson*.

Compare also what Edgar says to Gloucester (*Lear*, v. ii. 9—11):

Men must endure

Their going hence, even as their coming hither.

Ripeness is all.

211 What he leaves—not only material possessions, but what constitutes his moral life What betimes—if we are to leave behind all that we possess what does it matter if we die early?

216 This presence—those present here

218 Sore distraction—perplexing state of mind approaching madness

219. Nature—explained by *Dover Wilson* as filial duty. Exception—personal disapproval

220 Roughly awake—rudely shake

222 If Hamlet . . . away—if Hamlet is beside himself, out of his wits.

226 Hamlet . . . wrong'd—Hamlet is the wronged party. 'Faction' in Shakespeare means simply party without any suggestion

227 His . . . enemy—his madness leads him to wrongdoing.

229 My disclaiming—it is a public disavowal of any wrong, intended to Laertes

232 In nature—in respect of filial duty.

233—234. Whose motive . . . revenge—the impulse of

which should, in this instance, urge revenge in honour—so far as the question of honour is concerned.

235 Will reconciliation—refuse any accommodation.

236—237 A voice . . . ungered—an authoritative opinion, founded on a precedent that I may forgive the injury without any loss of honour :—N. B. 'Laertes is not speaking idly : in an age when a gentleman's honour was as important (even financially) as a business man's honesty is in ours some kind of formal acquittal was a necessary precaution. Further, his reference to the decision of 'some elder masters' was according to custom . . . ."—*Dover Wilson*.

238 Offer'd love—proposed friendship.

243 I'll be your foil—a play on the meaning of 'foil' : i. e. a thin leaf of gold or silver, in which a gem is set so that its brilliance may show to advantage. Hamlet means that Laertes will distinguish himself at his expense. N. B. "The use of the plan, to produce a grimly ironical effect, is quite in Shakespeare's manner, after the mere delight in punning for its own sake had disappeared."—E. K. Chambers. Ignorance Want of skill—in fencing.

245 Stick fiery off—blaze forth.

246 By this hand—I swear by this hand.

247. Give them . . . Osric—"I assume . . . that Osric is an accomplice in the plot, the arrangements of which were I think, as follows : The poisoned and unbated sword was brought in with the bated loils, from which it was indistinguishable except on close scrutiny, and placed upon a side-table ; at the King's command Osric then brings forward a few of the latter and the fencers take their choice ; whereupon the King engages Hamlet in conversation, while Laertes, complaining of the toil he has selected, goes to the table and picks up the fatal weapon. It was the duty of the judges to see that every thing was in order so that the unbated sword could not have been introduced without the knowledge of one of them—a point the Elizabethan audience would appreciate while significant glances on the part of the King, Laertes and Osric while the scheme went forward would make every thing clear."—*Dover Wilson*.

249 Odds—balance of advantage ; handicap.

251. He's better'd—he has improved in practice,

253. This .. .... well—the rapier pleases me all right. Have .. .. length—are of uniform length.

255. Stoups—drinking vessels of varying dimensions.

256—257. If Hamlet give .. exchange—"If he wins the first or second bout, or even draws the third ('quit in answer' i. e. give as he gets) In any of these three events Hamlet will still stand a chance, since if he scores a single hit in the first three rounds, Laertes will only be one up, and even if the latter wins the first two straight off a draw in the third may mean a turn of the tide. As a matter of fact, it is Hamlet who wins the first two, while he draws the third"—*Dover Wilson*.

258. Ordnance—cannon.

259. Better breath—greater staying power.

260. Union—a pearl of great value. "Under pretext of throwing a pearl into the cup, the King may be supposed to drop some poisonous drug into the wine Hamlet seems to suspect this, when he afterwards discovers the effects of the poison, and tauntingly asks him, "Is thy union here?"

263 Kettle—kettle-drum To the trumpet—in answer to the sound of the trumpet

266 Now . . . Hamlet—it may be noted that Claudius makes a ceremonious affair of health—drinking. Of course ceremony is a cover for beery drinking.

267. Bear . eye—watch most carefully.

268. One—hit. No—Laertes denies it. Judgement—Hamlet calls for the opinion of the Judge.

274. A touch—it is not a full hit.

275 He's fat .. breath—N.B. It has usually been supposed to be a reference to the actor, Richard Burbage, who first played Hamlet Richard Burbage was fat Dover Wilson argues that if Burbage in 1601 was getting too stout for a part of a young student, Shakespeare would hardly deliberately call attention to the fact, and explains 'fat' as sweaty, for it suits the use of the handkerchief and Hamlet's reluctance to drink. 'Fat' is also explained as out of condition, which explains scantiness of breath.

276 Napkin—handkerchief.

277. Carouses—drinks.

284 And yet 'tis . . . conscience—Shakespeare saves Laertes from utter depravity. He is not devoid of conscience like the king.

285 You but dally—you do not play seriously.

285, Pass . . . violence—put all your strength and energy into the thrust

287. Afraid—afraid. Make . . . me—trifle with me.

289. Nothing . . . way it is a draw. "The opponents either score a simultaneous 'touch'—so slight as not to cause a scratch from Laertes' 'sharp,' or they catch each other's sword points in the *pas d'ana*, that is the hooks on the hilts of their daggers . . . and so 'lock'".—*Dover Wilson*.

290 Have at you now—"At the end of the bout, one of the judges, as was the custom, extends a rapier or staff between the fencers, to show that they must break off. Hamlet does so; Laertes—so I understand Shakespeare's intention—seizes the opportunity for a treacherous attack, shouting 'Have at you now!' as he plunges. Thus, I am told by fencers who remember Irving's performance at the Lyceum in 1878, the scene was played under the direction of Alfred Hutton, the well known and learned fencer".—*Dover Wilson*

294 As a woodcock—"alluding to the fact that woodcocks were trained to act as decoys for other birds, and sometimes, venturing too near the springe or trap, were caught themselves".—*Goggin*

296 She swoons . . . bleed—how heartless a villain the king is! He is little shocked by his own misdeed which sends the queen to death—the queen who was, on his own confession, so conjunctive to his life and soul. Now he will cover up his blundering crime by pretending that the queen had fainted and shifting off any suspicion that might otherwise arise.

298 I am poison'd—the queen indirectly becomes the instrument of the king's doom.

300 It is here, Hamlet—Laertes' conscience awakes when his treachery recoils on himself

301 Treacherous instrument—confession of his own treachery in using a poisoned and unbled sword.

305. Foul practice—mischievous plot

305. Turn'd . . . me—overtaken me.

308 I can no more—his breath fails him.

310. To thy work—do your proper work.

311. But hurt—only wounded. The king raises this cry (though he knows that it is a death thrust) to rally the people round him, and if the people had been very loyal to him, there would have been a *meles* in which Hamlet might have lost his life

313 Is thy union here—a sarcastic reminder of his false promise and also a grim suggestion of the potion effecting the union of the king and queen

315. He is justly served—he deserves his fate.

316. Temper'd—mixed

317. Exchange .. me—Laertes desires to forgive and to be forgiven

318. Mine . . . thee—I hold you free of the guilt of my death and my father's death *N B* Death ennobles and purifies Laertes. He rises to a height which would have been impossible while he was alive. He realizes the enormity of the king's crime against which shines Hamlet's nobility.

319. Nor thine on me—nor let your death be charged on me.

322. Chance—mischance.

323. Mutes or audience—silent spectators

324. Fell—cruel. Sergeant—a sheriff's officer who arrested a debtor.

325. Is ... arrest—will give me no respite.

327-328 Report .. unsatisfied—*N. B* this is a surprising change in Hamlet. Living he was sick of everything, and cried out—How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world, and when dying the thought that troubles him is that he will be misunderstood by his contemporaries and posterity. "On some fond breast the parting soul lies."

329. An antique Roman—alluding to the practice of suicide among the ancient Romans.

330 As thou art a man—I appeal to your manliness.

3233 What a wounded . . . me—should such a thought have troubled the heart-sick, the soul-weary, Hamlet to whom life seemed to have no meaning? In his dying moments Hamlet recaptures his care-free, generous, susceptible youth-



the youth that we may suppose to have lasted with him for a brief spell at Wittenberg.

335 Absent .. awhile—forbid to yourself the blessing of death for a while What a relief to Hamlet that "life's fitful fever" is over for him!

336 In this harsh . . . pain—Hamlet knows that he is laying a painful task upon Horatio.

341 O'er crows—saddens

343-344. Prophecy . . . Fortinbras—Hamlet nominates Fortinbras his successor and hopes that circumstances will not bar his succession He has . . . voice—Dover Wilson sees in it the constitutional theory of the age The voice of the reigning monarch when he had no heir of his body was a factor in choosing the successor.

345 Occurrents—occurrences. More and less—great and small

346 Solicited—incited The rest is silence—the curtain falls on the anguished, frustrated life of Hamlet

348 Flights . . . rest—a touching, tender and most loving farewell of Horatio to Hamlet! Let not a single angel, but a body of angels, hymn Hamlet to final rest

349 Drum—martial music.

351 Cease your search—you need not go farther.

352. This quarry . . . havoc—this heap of the slain proclaims an indiscriminate and immoderate slaughter of game. A metaphor from the chase. Quarry—a technical term for the game, alive or dead Havoc—indiscriminate slaughter.

353 Eternal cell—grave.

354 At a shot—at a single shot.

356 Our affairs . . . late—we come too late with our embassy from England.

360. Not from his mouth—Horatio points to the dead body of the king

361. Had . . . you—if he had been alive to thank you.

363 Just—exactly.

364 Polack—polish.

366 To the view—in view of the public.

369 Carnal . . . acts—Claudius' adultery, murder and incest.

370. Accidental judgements—such as the suicide of Ophelia. Casual slaughters—such as the slaying of Polonius.

371. Deaths cause—death of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Put on prompted. Forced cause—in self-defence

372 Upshot—result. Purposes mistook—plans that miscarried.

373 Fall'n heads—involving the plotters themselves in the destruction.

374. Haste—hasten.

375 Audience—hearing.

3.6 Embrace—accept. Fortune—succession to the throne of Denmark.

377. Rights of memory—rights which are remembered.

38 Vantage—opportunity

380 Draw no more—not bring others to support it.

381. This same—i. e. the duty to Hamlet (the explanation of things that remaining unexplained will render Hamlet's memory liable to censure and adverse judgement.)

382. Wild—distracted with vague, unstable rumours

383. On—on top of.

385 Put on pu to the trial

386 Proved most royally—made an ideal king. For his passage—to honour him in his departure from the world

387 Rites of war—formalities of honour paid to a warrior, dead on the battle field

388 Speak him—blazon forth his honour.

390 Field—battle-field. Amiss—out of place.

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q 1 What portions or passages of the play give you the best key to the character of Hamlet? In its larger aspect what was the problem he had to solve, and what its most practical solution?

Ans Hamlet's soliloquies may not always be the safest guide to the interpretation of his character; yet we have often to turn to them. His soliloquies do not always serve the purpose of self-revelation, for the motives stated in them sometimes contradict and cancel each other, but we can study the cross-currents of passion and thought sweeping

through his mind. He seems to be half in love with death; more than once he contemplates suicide. His first soliloquy begins.

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,  
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew !  
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed  
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter

We may ask what brings the thought of suicide again and again into Hamlet's mind. Not that he is incapable of executing his revenge, however critics may assume, for in the first soliloquy which opens with the thought of suicide, the revenge motive is unthought of. His mother's guilt weighs upon his spirits. It is more than disillusion. It drives him to cynicism.

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable  
Seem to me all the uses of this world !

In interpreting Hamlet's character, this obsession with his mother's guilt should be first taken into consideration, it has nothing to do with the revenge motive as yet. From this soliloquy it appears that Hamlet has very keen sensibilities, and a high strung, shrinking, self-retiring nature. Perhaps a "muddy metled" (an epithet Hamlet applies to himself) son would not have made such a fuss over his mother's marriage, incestuous though it be. The task of revenge is later laid upon him by his father's ghost and his keen sensibilities, nervous excitability, and refined moral nature, make the task infinitely difficult for him.

His speech after the departure of the ghost shows how his soul has been convulsed by the disclosures made to him. The ghost's words—"remember me"—peal in his ears.

Remember thee !

Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat  
In this distracted globe.

Let it be noted that when the ghost leaves him, he thinks first of his mother and of his mother's defection from virtue and loyalty and then of his uncle Claudius.

O most pernicious woman !  
O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain !

His mother's guilt begins to work as a leaven in his mind. At length it seems to symbolize general corruption,

depravity and rottenness of society. So when we come to the end of the first act Hamlet says,

The time is out of joint : O cursed spite,  
That ever I was born to set it right.

Hamlet's tragedy of soul—for it is none otherwise—begins with his mother's incest

Much has been made of his soliloquy that ends the second act. This soliloquy is full of bitter self reproaches. It ought to be clear that Hamlet is not a dull, muddy—met led rascal, who simply peaks, like John a dreams, unpregnant of his cause. He could not have reproached himself, in such vile terms, if he had not been constantly haunted by the thought of revenge—a point which seems to have been ignored. More relative to the action of the drama is Hamlet's resolve to put the king to test. If Hamlet is sceptical about the ghost, it is but a rational doubt for one who has spent the days of his youth at the university of Wittenberg. It is right to assume that Hamlet is never forgetful of his purpose, and watches for an opportunity to take revenge, but, before doing so, he must be sure of his grounds.

I'll have these players  
Play something like the murder of my father  
Before my uncle I'll observe his looks ;  
I'll tent him to the quick , if he but blench.  
I know my course.

Here we have the explanation of his so-called inaction. The clue to the mystery of his character and personality lies in the opening lines of his first soliloquy, if we follow up this clue, we shall see that his disillusion about his mother—nay, the shock, caused by what appears to him her incestuous marriage, works in his mind, and then when he comes to know the circumstances of his father's murder, no less shocking, the revenge—motive comes to be imposed upon it. It should be noted that his disillusion, weighing upon his spirit, does not weaken his purpose of revenge.

Hamlet's revenge motive is made to transcend its narrow limits. The adultery of his mother, the murder of his father, then the incestuous marriage of his mother that follows, the debauchery of Claudius, are all but manifestations of rottenness in the state of Denmark. The time is out of joint, and

setting it right seems to be the colossal task for Hamlet. But the evil and corruption of society seem to dismay him more than the task of revenge. So the shock about his mother, the task of revenge laid upon him by his father's ghost, and his aching sense of a general corruption of society, come to be blended together in his motive of action.

Q 2 How do you explain Hamlet's inadequacy for his task? What was the measure of his success? What do his failures suggest of human limitations in general?

Ans. Hamlet's delay in carrying out his revenge has to be explained by both external and internal difficulties. Under external difficulties may be put the following: 'The king is always alert and cautious; he has always his Swiss body-guard to look after his safety; his queen is constantly present with him. Hamlet has, therefore, little opportunity of taking his revenge, these external difficulties are not easy to overcome. Under internal difficulties may be put his tender and delicate sensibilities, his passionate imagination, his moral nature, and his habit of thinking too precisely on the event. It has been pointed out by critics that the intellectual bias in Hamlet incapacitated him for action; in other words, too much thinking and speculation paralysed his power of will and his capacity for action. If we accept the views of Goethe and Coleridge, then the question of his inadequacy for the task of revenge arises.

In the light of contemporary revenge plays, to which *Hamlet* was affiliated things assume a different aspect. Delay in executing the revenge is the characteristic of the revenge-play, as a matter of fact the revenge is postponed till the end, and the whole interest of the revenge-play lies in watching the difficulties with which the task is beset, and how these difficulties are overcome one after another. In *Hamlet* these difficulties have been intensified and multiplied, and have been made both external and internal. After all, *Hamlet* follows the technique and tradition of the revenge play, in the light of which there will appear no delay in Hamlet's execution of his revenge.

In the last scene the revenge is executed but at an enormous cost, because so many lives are involved. It cannot be said to be unqualified success for Hamlet. Accident seems

to play a large part in it Here is again the Shakespearian touch. Shakespeare always allows due latitude to accident in the scheme of life. The tragedy in *Othello* depends largely on accident. If accident has more to do with the execution of Hamlet's revenge than his own initiative, we may say that Shakespeare took up the old revenge play and touched it to finer issues—he has intellectualized the stuff of the old revenge play.

His failures, which the old school of critics attribute to his bungling, if they are admitted at all, can, imply that man is not master of his fate. Shakespeare recognizes that man's power of will and action are limited by forces over which he has little control. So it is said in *Romeo and Juliet* :

A power greater than we can contradict  
Has thwarted our intents.

Q. 3. Give some impressions of Hamlet's intellectual character of his art, of his moral nature of his seriousness of purpose, of his power of will. What is his predominant trait? Account for his vacillation.

Ans. To illustrate Hamlet's intellectual character we should have to refer to one of his soliloquies, namely that which ends scene iv of act IV. In this soliloquy he discusses the aim and purpose of living, the function of reason in man, the issue of greatness. Man, Hamlet says, will hardly differ from a beast, if his chief business is to sleep and eat.

Sure he that made us with such large discourse,  
Looking before and after, gave us not  
That capability and godlike reason,  
To fast in us unused.

He dissects his own motive in this soliloquy: it may be either bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple of thinking too precisely on the event. What greatness means to him is that it is not to stir without great argument, but greatly to find quarrel in a straw, when honour is at stake.

Of his wit, it is rather caustic—there are numerous examples in the play. The first instance is his comment on the king's fathering him. When the king addresses him, "My cousin Hamlet, and my son," Hamlet is disgusted, and remarks (to himself of course), "A little more than kin, and less than kind." Some of his remarks in his conversation with Rosen-

crantz and Guildenstern are marked by the subtlest wit. We may give one instance.

*Rosenkrantz* Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality, that it is but shadow s shadow.

*Hamlet*: Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarch; and outstretch'd heroes the beggar's shadows.

He is also capable of innocent flashes of wit. We may take his remark addressed to one of the players, "O my old friend! Thy face is valanced since I saw thee last; comest thou to beard me in Denmark."

But in his conversation, with the king or Polonius, he displays a mocking, cynical wit. When the king asks him, "How fares our cousin Hamlet?" Hamlet replies, "Excellent, i' faith, of the chameleon's dish; I eat the air, promise-crammed, you cannot feed capous so."

When Polonius says that he enacted Caesar, and was killed in the capital, and Brutus killed him, Hamlet replies, "It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there." His macabre wit is displayed in the grave yard scene.

Schucking writes, "An individual note of comedy is struck by Hamlet's caustic wit—especially when speaking to Ophelia's father thanks to the licence his pretended madness affords him. It may certainly be assumed that the less sophisticated members of an Elizabethan audience laughed at much of what a more sensitive public to-day may feel compelled to take seriously. Hamlet's answer, for instance, to the conceited Polonius, "You are a fishmonger" (II ii. 174), or his bantering words to the actors during the performance of the 'Mouse Trap' (III ii. 152, 'We shall know by this fellow the players cannot keep counsel, 'they'll tell all,' certainly, offered no problems to the audience at the Globe. Even the 'macabre' wit item such as the one about Polonius being at supper, 'not where he eats but where he is eaten' (IV iii. 18) probably caused a hilarity we cannot now completely share. The importance of these comedy passages to Shakespeare is shown by his even inserting one immediately before the tragic climax of the play, and mocking at court fashions in the scene with Ophelia."

Hamlet's keen sensibilities seem to have aggravated the situation. His moral nature is shocked at and revolts against his mother's incestuous marriage. It darkens his whole

life, and leads to the tragic end. We may take again the intemperance of the king and the Danes in general, how Hamlet storms at it. He is nauseated by the hypocrisy of Polonius and the whole court, he is hurt by the insincerity of Ophelia. It is his moral sensibilities that make him so acutely conscious of his inability to deal with the evil of the times and carry out his revenge.

His seriousness of purpose has been questioned by some critics. But we have little doubt of it. As soon as the ghost leaves him (I. v.), he swears to remember the injunction of the ghost—nothing else to dwell in his memory. Here is evidence of his seriousness of purpose. But critics point out that he lets purpose fritter away, and note his self-reproaches in his later soliloquies. The fact is that Hamlet cannot make up his mind until he has positive proof of the king's guilt beyond the mere words of a ghost:

I'll have grounds  
More relative than this; the play's the thing.  
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

Then again we may take his soliloquy at the end of scene iv. of act IV, the concluding lines of which show his seriousness of purpose:

O, from this time forth,  
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth.

His power of will has been questioned by critics. It goes with his seriousness of purpose. His power of will is shown, in his deciding he must have a more positive proof of the king's guilt for which purpose he arranges the play; it is shown again in taking immediate action when he is sent to England in the company of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern—he loses no time in substituting the names of his two companions for his own in the commission and so ensuring that they are put to death on their arrival in England.

As to his predominant trait, there is a difference of opinion. Coleridge, for instance, says it is intellection, thinking and speculating over much; Bradley says it is melancholy. It is difficult to say which is a predominant trait in Hamlet. Perhaps his sensibilities, his imagination, his wit, all together form the predominant trait in him.



✓ Q. 4. What do you say of the element of mystery in this drama? If Hamlet feigned madness, did he deceive everybody? How could feigning insanity further Hamlet's designs of vengeance?

Ans. Hamlet's character is a mystery to critics. It need not be so much of a mystery as critics make it out to be. In the original *Hamlet* story, ascribed to Kyd, Hamlet might have been a much simpler portrait, barely outlined, and his motive of action would have barred all misinterpretation. But Shakespeare has intellectualized the character; hence there is so much of mystery in Hamlet. The task of revenge is laid upon him by his father's ghost, and the motives of action, as stated by him in his soliloquies, seem to be contradictory. There is a veiled confusion of motives in the play.

Hamlet's feigned madness is to ward off suspicion, and also to further his designs. It is as true that this feigned madness was part of the machinery of the old revenge-play. Critics seem to ignore this point. If we go by the tradition of the old revenge play, it will necessarily be assumed that madness was feigned by Hamlet for the purpose of furthering his revenge. It need not be explained as a safety valve; that is to say, he put on an antique disposition so that he might not actually go mad.

By feigning madness Hamlet was able to throw Polonius, and the king's agents, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, off the scent, but it is doubtful whether he has been able to impose upon the king. The king was as astute as, or even more astute than, Hamlet. Both the king and Polonius spied upon Hamlet in his interview with Ophelia. While Polonius was more than convinced of love as the cause of his madness, the king was far from being satisfied by Polonius's explanation. The king spoke out forthright

Love! his affections do not that way tend;  
Nor what he spoke, though it lack'd form a little  
Was not like madness,

Hamlet's madness did not certainly deceive the king. He at once made up his mind to send Hamlet to England. The king might have also a suspicion of Hamlet's designs, for he says,

There's something in the soul,  
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,

And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose  
Will be some danger

Q 5 Goethe tells us that "The Work is tragic in its highest sense." Analyse this statement. Cite instances to prove or disprove Goethe's dictum that "The hero has no plan, but the piece is full of plan."

Ans. We shall have to begin by quoting Goethe more fully. "Hamlet is endowed more properly with sentiment than with a character; it is events alone that push him on; and accordingly the piece is somewhat the amplification of novel. But as it is Fate that draws the plan, as the piece proceeds from a need of terror, and the hero is steadily driven on to a deed of terror, the work is tragic in its highest sense and admits of no other than a tragic end."

We may now note the points in Goethe's criticism of Hamlet's character and of the drift of the play. According to him, Hamlet is all sentiment, and has no well-defined character. Goethe puts forward such a view because Hamlet is, as he thinks, the play thing of circumstances, he has no initiative of his own, he is simply pushed on by the stress of circumstances.

This view is not correct. It is true that accident plays a large part in the accomplishment of his revenge. But is there an evidence to show that Hamlet does not act, but is acted on? First he arranges to bring to light the king's guilt; secondly, he convinces his mother of her sin and converts her to virtue. Thirdly, he saves his own life by altering the commission which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are carrying to England; fourthly, he grapples with the pirates and boards their ship. And all these actions are decisive in furthering the development of the plot. How can then Goethe say that Hamlet simply drifts on?

The next point that Goethe makes is that *Hamlet* as play has little dramatic cohesion. Why? Because everything is left to circumstances or to fate; because Hamlet has no initiative of his own. "It is fate that draws the plan." Here again Goethe is wrong. The climax of the play is at the point when the king rises hastily as the scene of Gonzago's murder is enacted before him. The action is at first a little slow and deliberate, but from the climax onward the action

rushes on headlong. *Hamlet* satisfies all the demands of a well constructed play, its amplification notwithstanding. The dramatic interest and suspense are kept up till the end. From the climax onward there seems to be no dissipation of dramatic energy.

Goethe's view needs to be modified and re-stated. First, all that happens in *Hamlet*, is not solely the working of fate, though fate, may have something to do with it. It is true, as Goethe says, that the action of the play starts from a deed of terror, and ends again in a deed of terror. It is true again that there could have been none other than a tragic end. The tragic end is to be explained and substantiated by the conflict between human will and forces both external and internal, also by the clash of individual wills between the king and Hamlet. Perhaps the whole truth of the king is summed up in Hamlet's own words.

There's a divinity that shapes our ends  
Rough hew them how you will.

**Q 6** How is this play to be regarded in the light of modern science? Does it teach definite lessons concerning the relation of man and circumstances? Does it contribute any helpful element to modern psychological speculation or experiment?

**Ans** Modern science has something to do with the relation of man to his environment, or to the physical world. Man has to strive with the forces, it is regarded as an unequal contest by many a thinker, for example, Thomas Hardy, who has been so penetrated by the scientific spirit and outlook. We need not share Hardy's views which are pessimistic, born as they are in a scientific age. But in a tragedy something like this struggle between man and forces which lie outside his control is presumed. The ancient Greek tragedians had the same conception of struggle, in those days the forces which crush human will and power were summed up in 'fate' or 'destiny'. This very conception, which was the essence of the ancient Greek tragedy, being transmitted through the ages, was taken over by Shakespeare and modified to some extent.

We may quote here the view of a philosopher and scientist, Alfred North Whitehead, it links up the conception of an overruling destiny of Greek tragedy with scientific

thought. "the conception of the moral order in the Greek plays was certainly not the discovery of the dramatists. It must have passed into the literary tradition from the general serious opinion of the times." Again he says, "their vision of fate, remorseless and indifferent, urging a tragic incident to its inevitable issue, is even possessed by science. Fate in Greek tragedy, becomes the order of nature in modern thought." In Hamlet, this deep underlying faith, which is at the root of all human affairs, is incidentally set forth in one of the speeches of the king in the play of the murder of Gonzago:

Our wills and fates do so contrary run  
Our devices still are overthrown;  
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.

The character of Hamlet has become an interesting problem to modern psychologists. It was of course Goethe who first started the psychological bogey about Hamlet; then came Coleridge. Their interpretations of the character are psychological. Lately the character of Hamlet has been taken to pieces by the psychoanalysts. Psychological analysis explains all the troubles of Hamlet as due to his obsession with his mother's incest; a psychoanalyst describes it as Oedipus-complex. Those who regard Hamlet as a victim of melancholia, explain his enervation of will and purpose by this fact. There is no end to psychological theories that have been started to interpret the character of Hamlet. However these psychological theories may be interesting, Shakespeare certainly means that Hamlet should be studied as a dramatic projection a figure on the stage in relation to other characters and to his dramatic environment.

**Q. 7.** What would you think is the chief reason for the universal interest in Hamlet? How do some of the elements give the play a rank in the dramatic and literary world?

**Ans.** The intellectual element in Hamlet, while he is intensely human—the flower of Renaissance Humanism—gives such universal interest to the play. The Renaissance created types of splendid individualism, and the tradition, so established, has been followed till now. But Hamlet is not merely ego-centric like the Renaissance figures. He is a man of wider human relations; his self-analysis arises from his awareness of this—and so it reveals his mental torture.

The reader feels unconsciously that Hamlet is a protagonist of human suffering who might even be compared to Prometheus. The fact is that Hamlet suffers not simply for something purely personal, his wrong, which needs to be avenged, so intimately and personally it touches him, is traced to a deeper source—and ultimately covers a wider area.

The time is out of joint, O cursed spite  
That ever I was born to set it right.

Hamlet will have a symbolical significance to a discerning reader, and must appeal to all who have to think of themselves and of their problems in terms of their reaction to their times or epochs. The character of Hamlet is so popular because apart from the fact, that it arouses sympathy in every heart, a reader is apt to identify himself with Hamlet, and substitute his own problem for Hamlet's; it is true that it breeds exaggerated self-importance in some readers who read their own troubles and problems into the play of Hamlet. There is, in any case, a tendency among critics to interpret Hamlet in terms of their own minds, outlook and experience. It is observed by T. S. Eliot: "These minds often find in Hamlet a vicarious existence for their own artistic realisation. Such a mind had Goethe, who made of Hamlet a Werther, and such had Coleridge who made of Hamlet a Coleridge."

The various interpretations offered of the play, and particularly of the character of Hamlet, testify to its popularity. Objectively viewed, Hamlet will appear to suffer so acutely because however he may desire to fulfil his task of revenge, which is a personal matter, his mind and heart are more agitated by issues less personal and more general—and these issues are human. So *Hamlet* has retained its popularity.

*Hamlet* will always have a high rank in the dramatic and literary world because again of the human interest of the main character, and of the human tone of thought and reflection, embodied in the play. It is a play, rich in human speculation, in meditation on practically all important problems of existence. It is not implied that *Hamlet* is a moral treatise; a moral treatise is a dead and non-human thing. *Hamlet* is a living drama, rich in speculation (which must be distinguished from stereotyped moral maxims) on human thought and action, called forth in relevant context.

Q. 8. "When *Hamlet* was written Shakespeare had passed through his years of apprenticeship and become a master dramatist" Develop this statement (*Calcutta University*, 1928).

Ans. This quotation is taken from Dowden. Dowden points out that in his earlier plays Shakespeare took more pains in giving ingenious and fanciful expression to his perceptions, in fact he studied the art of expression more than thought itself. Hence in his early plays we find pretty fancies and conceits often happily worded. there is more of the bloom of poetry in his earlier plays, but less of ripe wisdom and soul-stirring thoughts, as expressed in his tragedies. His tragedies mark a great advance upon his earlier plays Shakespeare has now attained a balance of thought and expression, neither is his expression richer than his thought, nor does his thought outstrip his expression (as in his later romances—*Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale*, *Pericles*)

Hamlet contains much of poetry or poetic expression of thought we should rather say poetry of the condensate kind. It records Shakespeare's deepest thoughts as the result of his brooding on life and its problems. In the utterances of Hamlet, the king, Polonius, so many points of view are put forward that we must admit that Shakespeare viewed life as a whole. Hamlet is the principle character in the play and all the rest of the characters do not count at all, but it is not a single aspect of life, such as is represented in Hamlet himself, that Shakespeare paints in the play. The fact is that Hamlet is weighed with the burden of thought and meditation, it is the fruit of Shakespeare's ripe wisdom and experience. Hamlet's disillusion and cynicism, if they are to be interpreted subjectively, represent a passing phase or mood of Shakespeare. As we go through the play, we are surprised by Shakespeare's flashes of insight in stray remarks, however they may have been called forth by the dramatic situation.

The difference between his early plays and tragedies is that there is a balance between thought and expression in the tragedies, whereas in the early plays the thought is unsubstantial and has little to do with life itself, the expression being more ingenious and elaborate. When we compare Shakespeare's tragedies with his later plays (*the Romances*),

the balance again seems to be disturbed—thoughts seem to come crowding and hurling and can hardly be packed into speech, the very language is strained in an attempt to utter them, but there is again in the later plays little of the tumultuous passion that agitates the soul of the tragic hero.

Q 9 Comment on the following critical dictum—"Hamlet is Shakespeare"—H A Taine, *History of English Literature*. (Calcutta University, 1917)

Ans Those critics who subjectively interpret Shakespeare's plays, identify Shakespeare with this or that character created by Shakespeare. He has been mostly identified with Prospero of *The Tempest*. Prospero's farewell to the magic art and his burying of the magic wand have been taken to symbolize Shakespeare's own farewell to the stage.

So some critics identify Shakespeare with Hamlet, so richly gifted with intellect, imagination, sensibility and reason. These critics seem to read their own meaning into *Hamlet*. They forget that Shakespeare is writing dramas and that the art of drama is impersonal and objective. The plain fact is that Shakespeare cannot be absorbed into, but rather transcends, the characters he calls into being, in other words, he must be greater than the characters he has created and we belittle him by identifying him with this or that character. It cannot be denied that Shakespeare's personal outlook and general tendency of thought are reflected in his plays, in fact no artist can wholly disown his self, for art is, after all, man's self expression. By reading Shakespeare's plays we can discover the tone and colour of his thought and reflection but it is impossible to reconstruct what the man was, or what he did, nor even what his personal attitude towards life was.

In *Hamlet* Shakespeare incidentally says that the business of drama is to hold, as it were, a mirror up to Nature. It means that the dramatic art is purely impersonal and objective and that the dramatist must totally efface himself, that the dramatist is less of a dramatist if he makes his characters a vehicle of his personal views. It is, therefore, absurd to identify Shakespeare with any one of his characters in his plays.

Verity seems to agree partly with Taine, though not going so far as to say that Hamlet is Shakespeare. Verity

writes, "I think, too, that a strong reason why for many readers *Hamlet* (like *The Tempest*) means so much is the feeling that here we get near to Shakespeare himself, that the tragedy contains a measure of self-revelation. Some critics, of course, reject altogether the personal interpretation of Shakespeare's plays. His art, they insist, is purely impersonal, the utterances of his characters are to be regarded as purely "dramatic"; far from "unlocking his heart" to us in his dramas, he worked in a sphere of sheer fancy, reducing neither his own nor the nation's life and experience. I confess that this theory of impersonality, of the creator's absolute self-detachment from what he creates, is beyond my comprehension; nor can I sympathise with the view that even if Shakespeare did project himself into his plays, we have no means at all of determining when he did so. To me his plays are documents which tell us a good deal about Shakespeare—not indeed the details of his political or religious opinions, but the general complexion of his sympathies, his prevailing moods at different periods of his career, his outlook on life. . . Now *Hamlet* belongs to a group of works, tragicomedies and tragedies, in which the general outlook on life is overcast. Shakespeare dwells on the seamy side of things, emphasizes the corruptions of society, especially of courts and court life, dissects the frailties of human nature, and represents the world as out of joint. There is much of this temporary spirit of disillusion and embitterment in *Hamlet*. Shakespeare even places in Hamlet's mouth invective more appropriate to a subject than a prince, the very indictment of society, indeed of society and life itself, which he expressed in the *Sonnets*, so that personally I cannot resist the conclusion that Shakespeare had himself lived (in the tragedy outlined in *Sonnets*) through much if not all the desolation to which he makes Hamlet give vent."

Q 10 State with reference to the text what we may learn about the Elizabethan stage from Hamlet's conversation with the players.

(Calcutta University, 1929)

Ans In the second scene of the second act Hamlet is informed by Rosencrantz that a company of players has arrived to entertain him. It appears that Hamlet once used to take delight in these players. They are represented as



'the tragedians of the city' Once they enjoyed the favour and patronage of the public, and it naturally surprises Hamlet that they should be on tour. Rosencrantz remarks, "their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation." In this remark is contained an allusion to the rivalry between the professional players and the boy-actors, better known as the Bchildren of the Royal Chapel.

It is pointed out that in 1601 the company of players (to whom Shakespeare belonged) was in disgrace at court owing to the share they had taken in the conspiracy of Essex and Southampton. The charge against them was that they had performed *Richard II* to encourage the conspirators. It may be assumed that they had travelled during the autumn; they seemed to have been at Aberdeen in October and at Cambridge near about the same date. This is most likely the travelling alluded to 'Inhibition'—the term used by Rosencrantz, will, therefore, mean a refusal of permission to act at court, and the 'innovation' might refer to the popularity of the boy-actors.

It was about 1601 that the Children of the Royal Chapel were acting at the Black Friars. So we are told by Rosencrantz that there is "an eyrie of children, little eyases, that cry out at the top of the question, and are most tyrannically clapped for't." Here is evidence of the popularity of the boy-actors, the rivalry between the professional players and boy actors was known as the War of the Theatres. Ben Jonson seemed to have egged on the boy-actors. Between 159. and 1603, they produced Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* and *Poetaster*, satirical plays, full of talks by rival poets and players. So when Hamlet asks Rosencrantz why the boy actors have been purposely set against the professional players, for it is not to their interest to disparage a calling which they may have to adopt in their adult years, Rosencrantz replies that this rivalry is purposely fostered, and that the manager of a theatre would accept no play in which this dispute had not been introduced. As he puts it, "The nation holds it no sin to turn them to controversy; there was, for a while, no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question." By 1604, as E. K. Chambers points out, the so-called war of theatres was over, and Jonson and Shakespeare had probably become friends again.

**Q 11.** Explain and illustrate the criticism : It has been said that a strong reason why for many readers Hamlet means so much is the feeling that here we get near to Shakespeare himself ; that the tragedy contains a measure of self revelation.  
(Calcutta University, 1928)

**Ans** It is Verity who makes the above remark and Verity believes that the deeper questions of life agitating Hamlet's soul and finding expression in the play as well as Hamlet's pessimism, reflect Shakespeare's personal mood at the moment. The dramatic art is supposed to be impersonal, and on this assumption it would preclude any self-revelation of the dramatist. Verity argues that the plays cannot really enlighten us on Shakespeare's specific political or religious opinions, but can sufficiently convey to us the general trend of his thought and outlook on life. It is a passing gloom of Shakespeare's mind that is reflected in *Hamlet*, and it is connected by some with the rebellion and execution of Essex. Whether it is true or not is a different matter. A warfare of mind has been traced in his *Sonnets*, in which he seems to have plumbed deep into life. It is now-a-days a fashion to reconstruct a spiritual crisis in Shakespeare, and find out sufficient reason for it too. For critics who adopt a subjective interpretation of the plays of Shakespeare, it may seem to be a justifiable course, but those who regard drama as purely and strictly impersonal, may well question this method of interpretation. When Shakespeare seems to hold that the business of drama is to hold the mirror up to nature, there is little reason to think that Shakespeare will act against such a principle. Then again having had little knowledge of Shakespeare's life in details, we cannot be justified in relating his opinions and thoughts to those of his characters. It must be all guess work.

It is generally held that his tragedies reflect a phase of his mind—a phase of tumult and shaking of faith, which seem to have settled down when he began to write the Romances, for it is believed that the latter reflect calm and repose of mind—a state of restored balance. It can be but a vague generalization. It need not necessarily be assumed that Shakespeare could have experienced no spiritual crisis of the kind imagined, and that it could not have been reflected in his tragedies. But we should hesitate to ascribe to Shakespeare

the pessimism and bitterness of feeling that Hamlet displays Shakespeare must be superior to the characters he creates, we cannot identify him with Hamlet or with Prospero.

Art being self-expression, it is true that there must be some projection of Shakespeare in his plays. Shakespeare's style, Shakespeare's imagery, his tone of thought and reflection, even his habit of punning, all reveal him. It is true again that Hamlet records some of his deepest thoughts and reflections on life and its problems, Hamlet's satirical and cynical wit which glances at different phases of life might or might not have its roots in Shakespeare's personal reaction to court-life and its environment. We ought to be well aware of the danger of interpreting every bit of utterance in the play, however, significant it may seem to be, to have anything to do with Shakespeare. Verily, however, holds that Shakespeare must have lived through part of the tragedy he depicts in Hamlet, and some critics point out that Shakespeare, reflects his own sex-aversion in Hamlet, and the Sonnets too deal largely with this problem.

Q 12. Attempt an analysis of the character of Hamlet. How far do you agree with Goethe's criticism; "beautiful, pure and most moral nature" without the strength or energy which makes the hero sink beneath a burden which it can neither bear nor throw off? (Calcutta University, 1928)

Ans. The primary quality of Hamlet is his humanness, which has been little noticed by critics. If he had taken up the task of revenge as the only business in his life, he would have less trouble in executing it, but he began to think of wider issues—of time being out of joint and the prevailing corruption and vice, which is incarnated in the king, Polonius, his mother, even partly in Ophelia and in the Danes in general. If he had been indifferent to the people all around him, and if he had not fretted over the condition of things that he found in Denmark after returning from the school of Wittenberg, his task of revenge would have been easier. He felt himself drawn irresistibly to the humanity that seemed to be sinking into the brute-stage; from this arises his anguish of spirit with masks itself often in a cynical wit. It is not implied that he had the zeal of a moral reformer, he had nothing so much as such a role, and he expresses himself very definitely on this point.

The time is out of joint : O cursed spite  
That ever I was born to set it right

He was pained and acerbated in spirit by what he saw in Denmark and at the court. Hamlet was a retired scholar with a strain of idealism in him—and to be transported suddenly from the seclusion of study at Wittenberg to the glare of the Danish court, wallowing in drunkenness, hypocrisy, intrigue, adultery, was too much for him to stand, and his moral nature received the profoundest shock.

Goethe is right in saying that his is a beautiful, pure and most moral nature, which must have been convulsed by his experience in Denmark. But Goethe ascribes to Hamlet a weakness of character which is untrue. Hamlet possesses sufficient energy or strength of character to fulfil the task of revenge that was laid upon him, however repugnant it might have been to him. As a scholar he had a speculative turn of mind—a habit of thinking too precisely on the event. He could not, therefore, proceed straightway to his revenge without being sure of his grounds. First he was speculal about the identity of the ghost, it might be an evil spirit come to tempt him. He was, however, not long in discovering a method of testing the king, the play was the thing wherein he could catch the conscience of the king. Goethe makes of him a sentimental hero, he seems to have taken his clue from Hamlet's soliloquy at the end of the second act, where Hamlet reproaches himself for being "a dull and muddy—mettoed rascal," "John—has dreams, unpregnant of his cause," who can only "unpack his heart with words and fall a-cursing like a very drab."

It is true that Hamlet could not have thrown off the sacred task of revenge, nor is there anything in the play or in his speeches to show that he wanted to evade it. We little count the odds he had to fight against—his scepticism, his repugnance to bloodshed, the vigilance of the king, and lastly his moral confusion which must have proved the most serious obstacle to the immediate fulfilment of his task. In this connexion we shall have to remember too that delay in the execution of revenge is an established convention in a revenge-play; Shakespeare has got to follow it, but he rationalizes the whole proceeding, hence Hamlet is made to

appear what he is sceptical, speculating, perplexed in mind but always waiting for his chance

Q 13 Develop Mrs. Jameson's character sketch of Ophelia. "O! far too soft, too good, too fair to be cast among the bruits of this working-day world, and fall and bleed by the thorns of life" (Calcutta University, 1928)

Ans Mrs Jameson regards Ophelia as a fragile creature, too tender for the rough ways of the world. In fact amidst the tumultuous events of the play Ophelia seems to be out of place. We have very few glimpses of Ophelia in the play, in the scene of domestic life, in which we first meet Ophelia she is being lectured by her brother and her father. However the two may have a sense of righteousness, and a tendency to bully Ophelia, they realise that she needs their protection. They may be partly justified in warning Ophelia against Hamlet's love, for it may prove, and as a matter of fact it has proved, perilous to her peace and even sanity of mind.

Ophelia's unhappiness is traced by Mrs. Jameson to the impact of events, in the midst of which she is thrown. By sucking "the honey of music vows" Ophelia has fettered herself to a bond, from which she cannot get free. Well may she say.

And I, of ladies most deject and wretched

Ophelia is the innocent victim of forces that shape the tragic events of the play. About the meddlingness of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Hamlet says

'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes,

Between the pass and fell incensed points

Of mighty opposites

These lines with certain modifications may apply to Ophelia. Suppose we substitute 'frailer' for 'baser', we see the peril into which Ophelia is thrown. Caught in the meshes of antagonism between Hamlet and the king, she is lacerated in her struggle, and at last perishes in the darkness that falls upon her reason. The anguish of her soul is little revealed to us. Her father murdered and then buried without the proper rites of funeral, her lover raving mad, as she supposes, she cannot bear the burden of life. There is a fine touch in the tribute that her brother pays to her:

O rose of May  
 Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia ;  
 O heavens : is't possible a young maid's wits  
 Should be as mortal as any old man's life ,  
 Nature is fine in love, and where 'tis fine,  
 It sends some precious instance of itself,  
 After the thing it loves.

It is pointed out here that on the altar of love Ophelia sacrifices her sanity and reason, the most precious possession of a man or a woman. No less tender and graceful are the final words of Laertes to his dead sister, when he rebukes the rude and uncharitable priest .

Lay her i' the earth ;  
 And from her fair and unpolled flesh  
 May violets spring !—I tell thee, churlish priest,  
 A ministering angel shall my sister be  
 When thou liest howling

Life has been so hard upon her ! Perhaps she might have graced a shepherd's cottage or might have been a second Perdita in a similar setting or background, if instead of being destined to be mated with the fiery and impetuous Hamlet, she had Florizel to give her love to.

Mrs Jameson writes, "The situation of Ophelia in the story is that of a young girl, who, at an early age, is brought from a life of privacy into the circle of a court—a court such as we read of in those early times, at once rude, magnificent, and corrupted . It is the helplessness of Ophelia, arising merely from her innocence, and pictured without an indication of weakness, which melts us with such profound pity. She is so young that neither her mind nor her person has attained maturity ; she is not aware of the nature of her own feelings ; they are prematurely developed in their full force before she has strength to bear them , and love and grief together rend and shatter the frail texture of her existence, like the burning fluid poured into a crystal vase . She says very little, and what she does say seems rather intended to hide than reveal the emotions of her heart. . . . Passion with Juliet seems innate, a part of her being, "as dwells the gathered lightning in the cloud , " but we never fancy her but with the dark splendid eyes of a Titan—like complexion of

the south. While in Ophelia we recognise as distinctly the pensive, fair haired, blue eyed daughter of the north, whose heart seems to vibrate to the passion she has inspired, more conscious of being loved than of loving; and yet, alas! loving in the silent depths of her young heart far more than she is loved."

Q 14 At what points does Hamlet seem to you the least sane? Give fully the reasons for your opinion

(Calcutta University, 1929)

Ans In his interview with his mother after the play-scene Hamlet seems to have little control over his indignant passion. He goes to see his mother, vowing to speak daggers to her, but use none. But he seems to have over done his duty. The sweep of menacing passion in his reproaches, quite stuns and paralyzes his mother. At last Gertrude implores him to speak no more. She says, "You turn my eyes into my very soul." She seems to be dismayed by the depravity within herself, which Hamlet's searching speech reveals to her. But Hamlet still goes on, and at this point the ghost intervenes. When Hamlet addresses the ghost, and confesses that "lapsed in time and passion," he has let go the opportunity of executing the revenge, Gertrude imagines that Hamlet holds discourse with the incorporeal air. She has the vividest impression of her son's madness. She neither hears nor sees the ghost; so it all appears to be Hamlet raving. She says,

This is the very coinage of your brain,  
This bodiless creation ecstasy  
Is very cunning in.

If we certainly see with the eyes of Gertrude, we may think that Hamlet is unbalanced

But it is in the grave yard scene, when Ophelia is being laid in the grave, that Hamlet speaks and behaves most wildly. He appears to be least sane in this scene. At first he did not know that it was Ophelia's burial. Then he sees the queen strewing flowers over Ophelia's corpse. Then suddenly Laertes leaps into the grave which has not yet been filled up, and begs the attendants to pile earth upon the living and dead until they have raised a mountain to over-top the old Pelion or Olympus. Now the slumbering passion of Hamlet is awakened.

He seems to have lost control over himself. In what he does and says, the difference between his feigned madness and real madness seems to fade away. Hamlet too comes forward and leaps into the grave, there is a scuffle between Hamlet and Laertes in the grave until they are separated. There may not be any thing wrong in his declaration that he loved Ophelia and that forty thousand brothers with all their quantity of love could not make up his sum. But he soon starts blustering; he seems to be hardly conscious of what he is doing or saying. He is simply carried away by the vehemence of his passion. These hysterical outbursts cannot be regarded as a pose. For the moment he forgets his pose as a madman and actually behaves like a madman.

**Q 15** "There is a method in Hamlet's madness; there is none in Ophelia's." Explain the reason of this difference. (Calcutta University, 1929).

**Ans** Hamlet simply poses as a madman, he is sane enough when he is in the company of his friend, Horatio. Polonius attempts to get at the trouble of his mind, and seems to see even some cogency in his wild, whirling words. Then Polonius says that there is method in his madness. Even with all his obtuseness Polonius is able to perceive that more is meant than meets the ear in all that Hamlet says. It is not possible for Polonius to catch at the meaning of Hamlet's ambiguous remarks, but he confesses that his replies are sometimes charged with a profound meaning—"happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so properly be delivered of."

So when Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come to sound him, they find that he "keeps aloof with a crafty madness." To them it seems to be partly a pose; of course they cannot be too sure about that. It is the king alone who has doubts about Hamlet's madness. After the interview between Hamlet and Ophelia, when Polonius and the king eavesdrop, the king's doubt seems to be confirmed. He can no more believe that his distraction of mind has anything to do with love and says,

There's something in his soul,  
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,



I do doubt the hatch and the disclose  
Will be some danger.

The point is that Hamlet's madness, though it imposes upon Ophelia, Gertrude, and Polonius, is not real, when it is suspected by the king, by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

That Hamlet's madness is not intended to be real, is shown by the contrast which Shakespeare provides in Ophelia's real madness. We see Ophelia alter she has lost her reason and sanity in the fifth scene of the fourth act. She has gone to see the queen and she keeps singing scraps of old songs, which have been considered by some critics as indelicate. Her mind seems to be running on the sad things spoken of in those old ballads. As contrasted with Hamlet's comments, we can find no cogency in her words. She is not raving mad, but her mind is wandering and she cannot keep it on one thing at a time. The king thinks that her madness is the result of deep grief at her father's death. Then again when the queen describes how Ophelia was drowned, her behaviour is exactly like that of one who has lost her reason,

Her clothes spread wide,  
And, mer-maid like, a while they bore her up;  
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,  
As one incapable of her own distress,  
Or like a creature native and indued  
Unto that element

**Q 16.** What inference would you draw as to Polonius' character from (a) his parting instructions to Laertes; (b) his instructions to Reynaldo; (c) his interview with Hamlet after the acting of the play? Describe each occasion in sufficient details and show your reasons for your answer. (Calcutta University, 1929)

**Ans.** Polonius comes upon Laertes taking his leave of Ophelia. He bids Laertes hasten to get aboard, and sends him off with his blessings and words of advice. Polonius' counsel is dictated by worldly wisdom. He seems to preach to him copy book maxims; these are likely to help young men to get on in this world, and to keep out of any scrape. Perhaps these are the counsels which a worldly-minded would give his son starting in life. Laertes should give his thoughts no tongue, nor carry any unproportioned thought into effect;

let him not seek out new friends but adhere to old ones ; let him avoid all quarrel and when he gets into one, let him wear himself like a man ; let him listen to other men's opinions, but reserve his own ; let him wear costly clothes but not affect finery, for the apparel oft proclaims the man ; let him be neither a borrower nor a lender, for a loan often loses itself and friends and borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry and so on and on. In these counsels Polonius betrays a base spirit of materialism and self-seeking.

The baser nature of Polonius is revealed in his instructions to Reynaldo whom he sends with money and instructions to his son. Polonius, as the king's chief councillor, depends on the art of spying. His habit of spying on the officials of the state, leads him to adopt the same method with regard to his son. So he instructs Reynaldo to make private inquiries about Laertes at Paris before calling on him. Drinking, fencing, swearing and quarrelling were all the vices of youth in those days, and Polonius is prepared to concede them to his son. He gives Reynaldo detailed instructions as to how he should proceed about it ; he should get hold of a stranger who may happen to know his son and broach the subject in an indirect way, and as they get on well, he should come to more personal inquiries about his son :

See you now ;  
Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth,  
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,  
With windlasses, and with assays of bias,  
By indirections find directions out ;  
So by my former lecture and advice,  
Shall you my son.

Polonius has a mistrustful nature and cannot help spying on his son and daughter. There is not much in Polonius, interview with Hamlet, after the acting of the play he comes to bid Hamlet go and see his mother. Hamlet makes a fool of Polonius. He points to a patch of cloud and says that it is in the shape of a camel. Polonius swears that it is so. Then Hamlet says that it is like a weasel, and Polonius agrees with him. At last Hamlet says that he will go to his mother at once. He realizes how Polonius simply humours him—"They fool me to the top of my bent."

**Q. 17.** What effect on the mind is produced by the opening scene? How does it prepare us for the rest of the play? What pervading temper in the play is indicated by Francisco's words, "sick at heart," almost at the very beginning?

**Ans.** The opening scene in a play of Shakespeare's strikes the keynote. The action is partly suggested and foreshadowed and the reader or spectator is at once attuned to the motif and atmosphere of the play. The opening scene of *Hamlet* is very suggestive and effective. The play opens at midnight, and the words exchanged between the changing guards, are charged with a singular, depressing feeling. "'Tis bitter cold and I am sick at heart," says Francisco. The physical chill is as strongly suggestive of the mental chill. Francisco's heart-sickness is symptomatic—it seems to anticipate the profounder heart-sickness of Hamlet. Francisco's words at once take our minds forward to Hamlet's speeches.

1. How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!  
Fie on't!—O, fie 'tis an unweeded garden,  
That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature  
Possess it merely.

2. I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercises, and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason!  
. . . And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust?  
man delights not me, no, nor woman neither. . .

In the opening scene there is the note of hushed expectancy, which in a subtle way, communicates to the reader also. "What, has this thing appear'd again to night?"—asks Marcellus. The very vagueness about it (the apparition) sets our minds on tender-hooks. Horatio's sceptical breath—"Tush, tush, 'twill not appear"—hardly dispels the mystery and terror that gloom our minds. With supreme skill the appearance of the ghost is timed:

When yond same star that's westward from the pole  
 Had made his course to illume that part of heaven  
 Where now it burns . . . . .

In the unroofed Elizabethan theatre-house the star must be visible to the audience, and what a shattering effect it must have produced on them with their superstitious beliefs! From the scene we carry away bewildering, unanalysable impressions such as are described by Wordsworth in a different context.

    Fallings from us, vanishings,  
     Blank misgivings of a creature  
     Moving about in worlds not realized.

'The night-watch—the more common effect on the two soldiers the deeper effect on the next party, and their speculations—Horatio's communication with the shadow, that seems as it were half way between theirs and Hamlet's—his adjuration—the degree of impression which they produce on the Ghost's mind, who is about to speak but for the ghost-like interruption of the bird of morning; all these things lead our minds up to the last pitch of breathless expectation; and while yet the whole weight of mystery is left hanging over the play, we feel that some dread disclosure is reserved for Hamlet's ear, and that an apparition from the world unknown is still a partaker of the noblest of all earthly affections'

**Q. 18** Comment on Hamlet's self revelation in the soliloquy after the break up of the king's council. Account for the ennui and dejection here shown by him.

**Ans.** The soliloquy beginning "O, that this too solid flesh would melt," is the first to reveal to us the troubles in Hamlet's mind. The king and his mother bid him cast off his mourning. Hamlet does not mind the king, but his mother's insensibility really hurts and exasperates him. As soon as the council breaks up, he gives vent to his pent-up feelings. He is as yet ignorant of the true cause of his father's death, but he has been brooding over the too hasty marriage of his mother—an incestuous marriage into the bargain. A quivering mass of sensibilities as he is, he almost breaks down under the shock. His mother's defilement taints his imagination and soul. How to wash himself clean of it. He first thinks of self-destruction:

Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
 His canon 'gainst self-slaughter !  
 His mother's sin has changed his outlook on life. He cannot think of it in isolation, but rather connects it with general depravity in Denmark .

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable  
 See to me all the uses of the world !  
 He would rather not think of his mother's defilement, but like a leaven it works into his whole being—it poisons and embitters the peace of his soul. Then from the particular he jumps to the universal .

Frailty, thy name is woman ! .  
 Hamlet has a shivering intensity of consciousness, and that is the whole trouble. His mother's over-hasty marriage becomes an obsession with him. No good can come out of this marriage .

O, most wicked speed !  
 It is not, nor it cannot come to, good :  
 But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue !

The last line of the soliloquy shows how lonely Hamlet is. He has none to whom he can open the troubles of his mind.

**Q. 19.** Account for the evasiveness of Hamlet in talking of the ghost with Horatio and Marcellus. How does Hamlet behave after the ghost is gone ? What does Hamlet mean by his words at the end of the first act "The time is out of joint" ? What do these words reveal in Hamlet's nature ?

**Ans.** All that the ghost reveals to Hamlet leaves him stunned for a while. His whole being is shaken, and his reason threatened. His having recourse to his tablets in this moment of tension is a feeble refuge from his shattering experience. And then to keep his sanity from going, Hamlet has to behave with mock light heartedness. The task of revenge which is imposed upon him by his father's ghost, and which he at once takes to his heart, demands of him caution. He cannot as yet trust anybody, even Horatio until he knows him still, better. As a matter of fact he cannot take Horatio into his confidence without revealing his mother's scheme. By extraordinary efforts Hamlet quickly recovers his balance, and pats off Horatio and Marcellus with a piece of nonsense .

*Hamlet.* How say you, then, would heart of man once think it ?

But you'll be secret ?

*Horatio, Marcellus.* Ay, by heaven, my lord.

*Hamlet.* There's never a villain dwelling in all Denmark

But he's an arrant knave.

Hamlet cannot, in any case, tell them anything that the ghost has revealed to him :

I hold it fit that we shake hands and part.

He has had to pretend to them that the ghost had nothing to communicate to him.

A few lines of soliloquy conclude this scene after Hamlet has dismissed Horatio and Marcellus, and his mind now returns to the ghost and all that the ghost has revealed to him. His mother's sin seems to him not an isolated event according to his habit of generalizing, of proceeding from the particular to the universal. So it strikes him at once that there must be something rotten in the life of Denmark ; and he feels that if he has to do his duty, he will have to root out the evil from its very source—a task too sweeping for him and naturally he has an aversion to it, for in any case the task of avenging his own wrong, does not solve the problem. His imagination sees deeper into the state of things—debauchery, adultery and intrigue at court, and general corruption abroad ; and his feelings and sensibilities are lacerated as he contemplates the whole situation, and realizing the stupendousness of his task, he cries out :

The time is out of joint, O cursed spite

That ever I was born to set it right !

What is borne home to him is that the task of revenge involves much wider issues, and his heart sinks within him. It shows that Hamlet has an idealistic temperament ; after all he is a scholar having spent his early youth in the seclusion of study, and so when he is transported into the real world, he finds himself quite knocked out.

**Q. 20** How do you explain Hamlet's behaviour with Ophelia as related by her to Polonius ? Has it anything to do with his putting on an antic disposition ?

**Ans.** Hamlet's interview with Ophelia follows soon after

the visit of his father's ghost. For the time being he recovers his balance, and hoodwinks Horatio and Marcellus. Later he begins to brood over the situation and he is "distraught." Evidently in a state of such mental confusion he comes to see Ophelia. But why should he behave thus with Ophelia? Perhaps he intends to break with Ophelia. He has to carry out the sacred task of revenge—and can entertain no other thought in his mind.

Yea, from the table of my memory  
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records  
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,  
That youth and observation copied there;  
And thy commandment all alone shall live  
Within the book and volume of my brain,  
Unmix'd with baser matter

He must banish love from his mind, and dedicate himself to the task of revenge. It may be argued that Hamlet might have more gently bidden farewell to love. To cast Ophelia off deliberately without being able to reveal the reason, would have hurt Ophelia more than what he had done. As the result of this interview none is more convinced than Ophelia of Hamlet's madness. She gives expression to it after the second interview.

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!  
The courtiers, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword;  
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,

Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,  
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;  
That unmatched form and feature of blown youth  
Blasted with ecstasy.

We may suppose that Hamlet runs straight to Ophelia after he has seen his father's ghost—he must at any rate be done with the business of love. It has as much to do with his determination to put on an antic disposition. After all the king must know that Hamlet is mentally deranged. Hamlet knows that through Ophelia Polonius will learn of his madness, and in due course the report will reach the king's ears. He is aware too that Ophelia is being tutored by her father for in the meantime she has, according to her

father's bidding, returned his gifts and letters. With some readers that may be a sufficient excuse for Hamlet to have nothing more to do with Ophelia. Ophelia has insulted his love; Ophelia has let him down. Such a view of the matter might naturally come to the over-sensitive Hamlet.

But the more potent reason seems to be that the idle thoughts of love and revenge cannot go together. Apart from the politic reason that he must impress Ophelia with his madness, Hamlet could mitigate the force of the blow to Ophelia only by feigning madness. At least she will know that she loses Hamlet and his love because he has gone mad.

Q. 21. How far do you think Polonius understood the method which he detected in Hamlet's madness? What part of Hamlet's language in his conversation with Polonius is due to his distemper, and how much consists of ironical turns to Polonius, own words?

Ans. Polonius has already formed the idea that Hamlet is mad from love after he heard Ophelia's account of his behaviour. Hamlet enters reading in scene 11, act II. and Polonius just then tackles him. His first question shows that he begins the wrong way—"Do you know me, my lord?" Hamlet replies "You are a fish monger". Of course Polonius can make nothing of this remark. Hamlet suddenly asks him, "Have you a daughter?"

This confirms Polonius' belief that Hamlet is mad from love. Still harping on his daughter! he says to himself. But as he was mistaken for a fish monger which is certainly a blow to his vanity—he naturally concludes that he is too far gone. He recalls the days of his youth when he was in love—"I have suffered much extremity for love." We doubt whether Polonius was capable of experiencing the sentiment of love.

In the rest of the dialogue Hamlet pokes fun at Polonius by painting a contemptible picture of old age. However obtuse Polonius may be, he feels the smart of his remark, and confesses to himself that though this be madness, there is method in it. Again he says, "How pregnant sometimes his replies are; a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of". This remark is meant to be general, and not to be of private



lar application to Hamlet. All that Polonius is capable of perceiving is the gleam of sense, sometimes even penetrating insight, in Hamlet's random remarks. Though Hamlet sometimes speaks sense in his madness, he does not suspect in the least that his madness is feigned. His casual hits of sense are regarded by Polonius as the very characteristics of a mad man. And there the matter ends. His conviction that Hamlet is mad for love, is not shaken in the least, even by subsequent incidents.

Q 22 Is there humour or sarcasm in Polonius, remark on hypocrisy? What does the king utter in the nature of a confession? Is there a crucial moment in the play? Does it foreshadow any subsequent episode?

Ans Polonius is conscious of duplicity he has always practised in the state affairs, and it has become a part of his nature, and the result is that now he is unable to condemn duplicity in the abstract. When carrying out his plan of "loosing" his daughter to Hamlet—using her as a decoy—he excuses and partly justifies such duplicity and hypocrisy.

We are oft to blame in this,—  
'Tis too much proved—that with devotion's visage  
And pious action we do sugar o'er  
The devil himself.

This remark is made by Polonius, not sarcastically but in a spirit of amused laughter at, or condonation of, what has become a second nature to him, and to what he is proud to think he owes all his success in statecraft.

But this self gratulatory remark of Polonius cuts the king to the quick. It is first revealed now that the king has ever been troubled by remorse.

How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!  
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,  
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it,  
Than is my deed to my most painted word.  
O heavy burden!

It is but the barest hint of remorse burdening the king's conscience. It carries our minds forward to scene iii, act iii, in which the king kneels down to pray. He has been a prey to remorse.

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven ;  
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,  
A brother's murder.

But he realizes that he is not yet in a mood to repent. Repentance can come only when he is prepared to part with the fruits of his crime—queen and throne. And prayer is meaningless without repentance. When he is at prayer, Hamlet comes upon him, and might have despatched him at a stroke. But will he be revenged then ?

A villain kills my father , and for that,  
I, his sole son, do this same villain send  
To heaven

So Hamlet spares the king. He must send him to hell, if anywhere for the murder of his father.

Q. 23. What is, Hamlet's view of Horatio's character ?  
What dramatic purpose does this speech serve ?

Ans. Horatio may be said to be a counterpart to Hamlet. Hamlet admires him for he possesses the very qualities that Hamlet lacks. Given to self-analysis, Hamlet knows that he is swayed by starts and fits of passion. Horatio's is a more balanced character. In fact the stoic ideal seems to be embodied in Horatio. As Hamlet sees it, Horatio is not a slave of passion — is one, who, in suffering all, suffers nothing—one who is indifferent to the smiles and frowns of fortune. Hamlet admires the stoical quality of endurance in his friend and his self-discipline. As Hamlet records his impression—

Bless'd are those  
Whose blood and judgement are so well commingled,  
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger,  
To sound what stop she pleases.

Hamlet has not been able to attain anything like this happy poise and balance of character, he is aware that his judgement is often warped by passion.

Hamlet's speech in which Horatio is eulogized, reveals indirectly Hamlet's singular weakness in restraining his vehemence of passion. And this weakness—vehemence of passion, lack of self-control—has an important bearing upon the course of action he follows. Spasmodic action is all that Hamlet is capable of. However he may think too precisely

on the event, he seems to be hustled on by circumstances. The speech points the contrast between the two, and the contrast clearly defines the outline of each character. It is also significant because it expresses Hamlet's yearning for a balance and harmony in his own character—all that means integrity of character and personality, which can ensure the accomplishment of one's objective.

**Q. 24** To what does Hamlet dedicate himself at the end of scene IV act IV? Do you agree with Swinburne that this soliloquy surpasses the famous *To be, or not to be*, on both philosophic and poetical grounds?

**Ans.** Hamlet's soliloquy—*To be, or not to be*, has been unduly praised. The fact is that it is more familiar to the reader than any other speech of Hamlet's—and has gained greater currency, and secondly deals with a more or less commonplace theme—death. Of course Shakespeare sets this commonplace theme of death in a new context, and gives it a speculative interest. After all Hamlet is a very popular character, hence the popularity of this soliloquy in which he contemplates suicide (not seriously, but as a matter of speculation), and so it has an attraction to every reader. Carefully analysed, the soliloquy has little of dramatic significance. It has a purely speculative interest, and no relation to Hamlet's subsequent conduct or action.

Hamlet's soliloquy at the end of scene IV, act IV is a searching self-analysis. In it he reviews his whole character and action—and expresses his admiration of a strong character, untroubled by any squeamish discussion of motives and alternatives. The key to Hamlet's character is in this soliloquy. He starts with a general observation of the difference between man and a beast—and reason is the criterion of this difference. It may be noted that Hamlet over uses his reason instead of letting this god-like faculty "lust" in him unused, and the result is that it often pushes on to mere speculation. He admires Fortinbras' courage, manhood, and love of honour which motivate his action undeterred by any "craven scruple". It should be noted too that he defines greatness as "true conformity with the feudal sense and tradition of honour."

Rightly to be great  
Is not to stir without great argument,  
*But greatly to find quarrel in a straw*  
*When honour's at the stake*

On *philosophic grounds* the soliloquy may be superior to Hamlet's *to be or not to be*, but we cannot agree with Swinburne in his view that it is more poetical. *To be, or not to be* is more popular because if it lacks seriousness of thought, it is all poetry.

**Q. 25.** Tennyson is quoted as saying, "the Queen did not think that Ophelia committed suicide, neither do I" What do you think about it? Is there anything in the play that seems to support the suicide theory?

**Ans** From the queen's graphic and detailed description of the manner of Ophelia's death, it does not appear to be a suicide. It cannot be a suicide when she is not conscious of what she is doing. She climbed the willow tree with "fantastic garlands," and then the branch gave way, and she fell into the stream.

Her clothes spread wide,  
And mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up,  
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes  
As one incapable of her own distress,  
Or like a creature native and indued  
Unto that element.

But in the public mind there has been a suspicion of suicide. The suspicion is reflected in the conversation of the grave diggers. The Coroner, certifies it as accidental death, but the Coroner's finding does not seem to have satisfied either the public or the church. The Church is definitely of opinion that it is a suicide. That is why Ophelia is buried with so little ceremony. The priest says that "her death was doubtful." But she is allowed "her virgin crants, her maiden strewments and the bringing home of bell and burial." No requiem is permitted to be sung for the peace of the departed spirit.

**Q. 26** What is the dramatic purpose of the Grave diggers' dialogue? How does mirthful contrast heighten tragic effect? How is the strain of tragedy relieved by comedy?

**Ans.** The grave-diggers' scene serves the primary purpose of comic relief. It is usual with Shakespeare to mingle the comic and tragic, the psychological reason being that each reacts upon the other. While the comic scene may relieve the tragic tension, it may often have the character of ironical comment, which is less obvious. It is true that the grave-diggers' scene on which Hamlet happens to come, brings the tragic theme into a lower key, anyhow a pretty long scene which though not connected with the action of the play is connected with Hamlet's macabre reflections may for the time being take his mind off the immediate issue, and so divert the reader's attention too. But the real point is that it images forth the dark, brooding, melancholy thoughts in Hamlet's mind, which seem to have been suggested by frustration and uncertainty about the execution of revenge—and it is to be noted, that there is no reference to the revenge. The grave diggers, scene then in a sense, deepens the tragedy of the situation.

In Hamlet's half serious, half-mocking discourse on the skull there is but lurking irony—the very irony of life and all its aims and purposes, and it arises from his sense of defeat and frustration. It reflects a mood of listlessness and despair which conveys to us the real issue of the tragedy that Hamlet himself experiences. The deep, underlying irony of the scene, which is likely to be missed by the casual reader, gives such effectiveness to it. It supplies the necessary pause before the final catastrophe takes place. The scene has an importance, more psychological than dramatic.

**Q 27** Discuss whether the queen's death is demanded by poetic justice.

**Ans.** At first sight the queen's death seems to be uncalled for. She has had nothing to do with the web of action and reaction, intrigue and counter-intrigue from which the issue of the tragedy follows. She seems to remain in a state of aloofness. She has an interview once with Hamlet, and it is a stormy one, and a second one with Ophelia, and we do not see much of a reaction in her now. It may seem strange that she should suffer, or pay the penalty of the king's crime.

